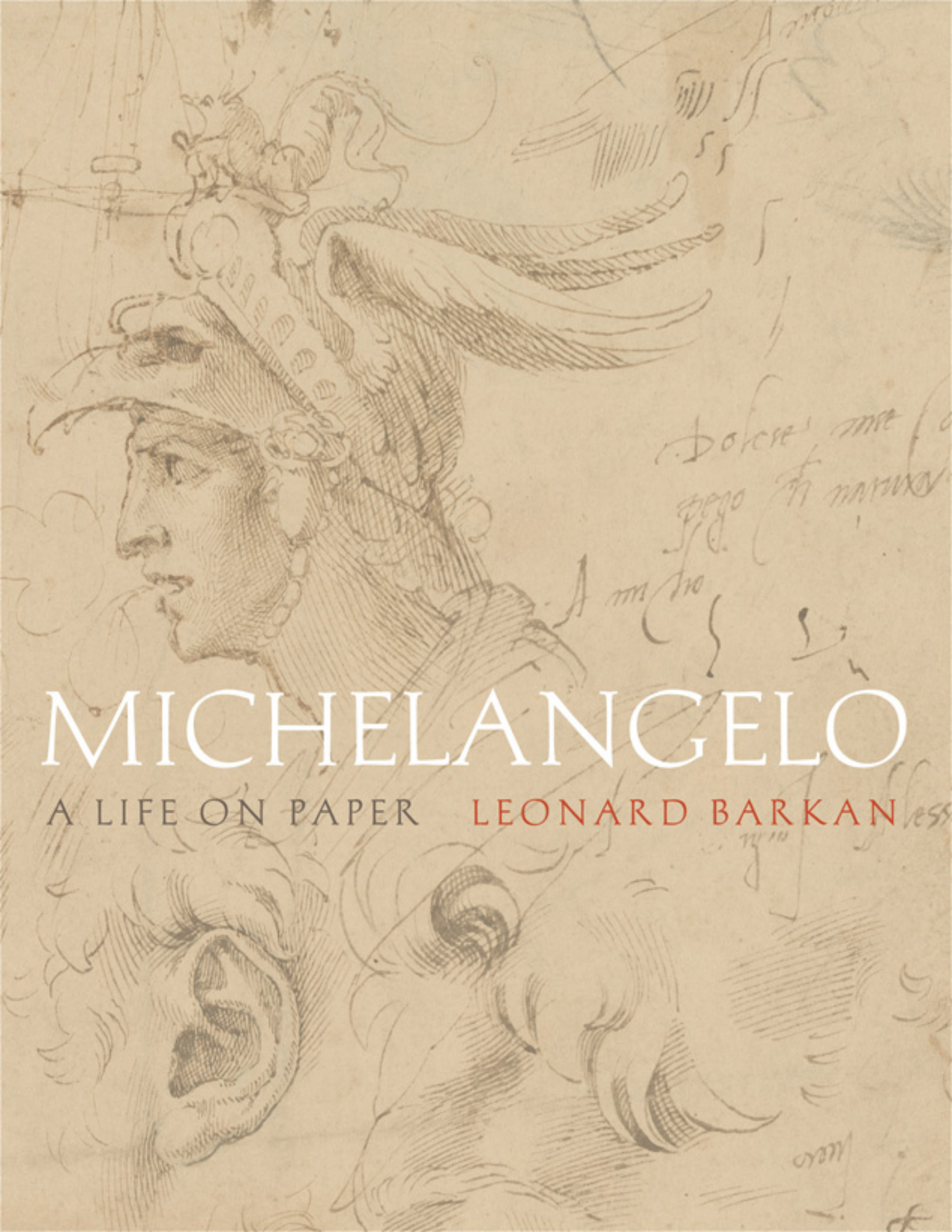

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A LIFE ON PAPER

LEONARD BARKAN

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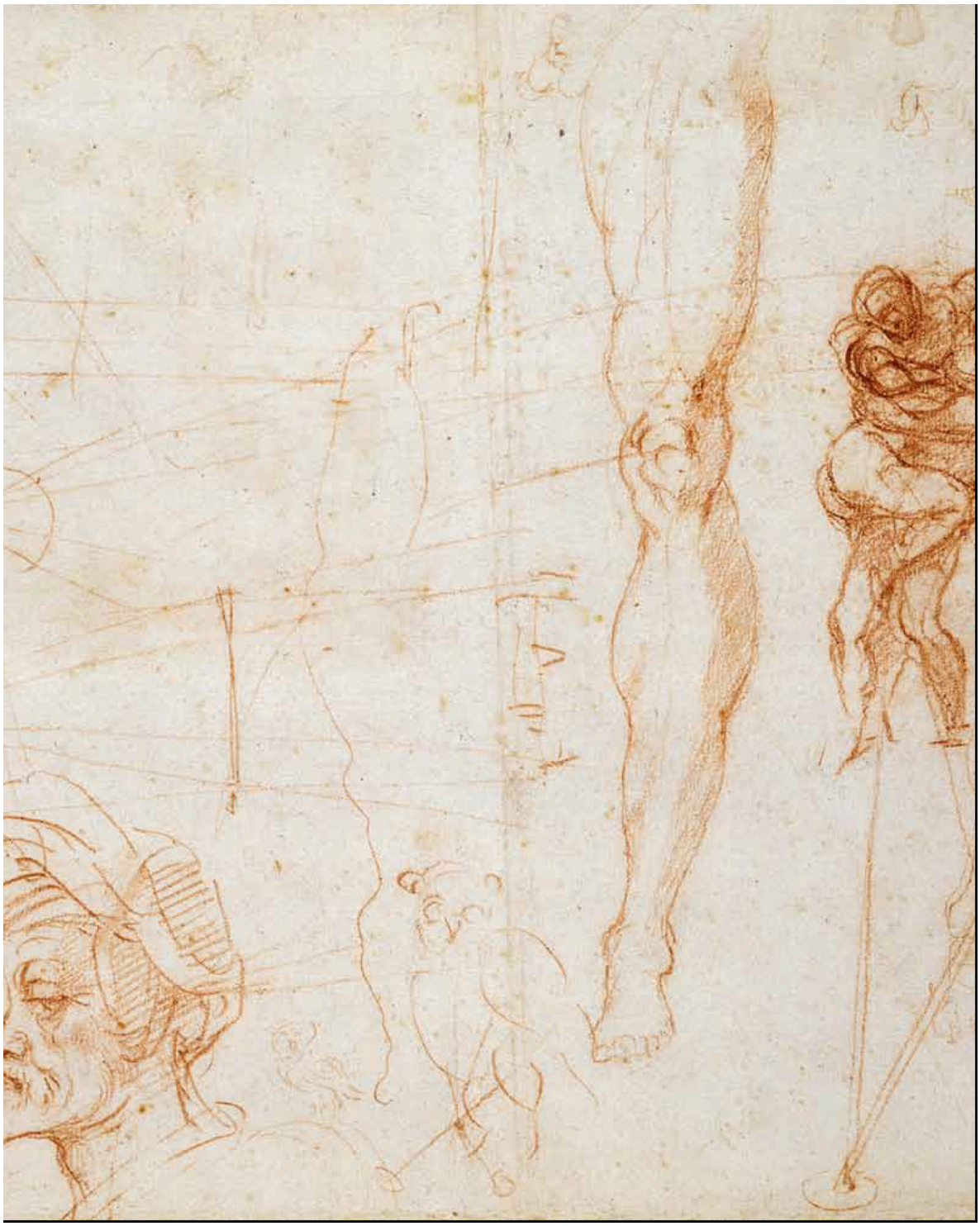

MICHELANGELO
A LIFE ON PAPER LEONARD BARKAN

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for Jon Koslow
1951–2006

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PREFACE

Michelangelo was a painter, a sculptor, and an architect. He was also a writer—of poetry, of personal letters, and of countless memos detailing all the entrepreneurship that was required to produce large-scale masterpieces. The vast majority of those who have studied Michelangelo consider him as a visual artist; others—a smaller number—have considered him as a poet. This book will argue that we cannot understand Michelangelo without a radical sense of the way that pictures and words entangled themselves within his creative imagination.

To the extent that this story has been told up to now, it has had to do with the fact that he wrote love poems with metaphors drawn from sculpture, or that his frescoes had their conceptual origins in the books he read, or that we can better understand his long career of unfinished monuments if we get to know his intentions by scanning his letters.

But this book attempts to locate the man in his full complexity on the pieces of paper that he covered with pen and brush strokes, with both words and images. Many have considered him the greatest draftsman who ever lived, and we are fortunate to possess some five or six hundred sheets with drawings generally agreed to be his authentic work. But it has not really been noticed before that a third of these drawings also contain text in his handwriting. Conversely, a quarter of the poems that we have in Michelangelo's autograph make appearances on the same pieces of paper as do drawings. And as for personal letters and bookkeeping memos, a notable percentage are on sheets that he used, earlier or later, for doodles, sketches, and beautiful finished works.

On these surprisingly multi-functioning sheets of paper, we can find everything from the grandest expressions of his monumental genius to the most intimate messages to himself, we can read his ambition and his despair, we can watch him live out his eighty-nine years as they express themselves in layer upon layer of words and pictures.

Often, the combinations of materials on these sheets offer us a glimpse into a truly mysterious privacy. Considering that he intended most of these drawings for his eyes only—in fact, he apparently did what he could, just before he died, to destroy many of them precisely because they represented too intimate a record—it comes as no surprise that they offer outward signs of a highly intriguing interior monologue. In one case, for instance, he draws two versions of a *David* statue and then inscribes next to them the enigmatic assertion, "David with his slingshot and I with my bow," followed by a signature. At other times, he inserts in the narrow spaces between sketches fragmentary religious utterances ("God, you are in man, in thought"; "Save me, O Lord, by thy name"; "sweet room in hell"), or verses, apparently quoted from memory, like "Gather them up at the foot of the wretched bush," from Dante, or "Death is the end of a dark prison," from Petrarch.

One of the ways to map the artist's inner territory of life and genius is to observe how frequently these sheets of paper are the sites where profoundly incongruent materials cohabit intimately. For example, one side of a sheet is devoted to a red chalk sketch depicting the Resurrection of Christ, while the other side is covered with careful notations of the moneys spent for chickens, oxen, clothing for two of his assistants, and funeral rites for his father. A beautiful drawing of a Madonna and Child is located next to a mock love poem that begins,

"You have a face sweeter than grape must, and it looks like a snail seems to have passed across it." On another sheet, Michelangelo inscribes a quatrain about God's artistry on a spot whose obverse is occupied by the drawing of a horse's rear end.

If some of the words amidst drawings are signs of the artist's intimate self-conversation, others are signs that Michelangelo's studio was also a place of society, where assistants, pupils, and patrons interacted with him. Thus, he writes "Draw, Antonio, draw, and don't waste time" to an assistant on a sheet where he has previously composed a beautiful Madonna, and the pupil in question has produced a ghastly copy right next to it. In another mood, and on a sheet where he and a different pupil have been drawing eyes, we read, "Andrea, have patience; love me, sufficient consolation." Elsewhere, these communications have to do with artistic production itself. Under a gorgeously rendered version of the *Fall of Phaëthon*, Michelangelo hastily scribbles, "If you don't like this sketch, let me know, so I'll have time to get another one done by tomorrow night"; on a different page, next to some lovely projections for a triumphal arch, he writes, "I don't have the courage because I'm not an architect."

These examples are largely drawn from Michelangelo's work as a visual artist who produced text, literally, in the margins. But it is equally significant that when he committed himself to poetry—a calling he took more seriously than some have believed—he was also likely to intermingle alternative media of expression on a single sheet. Sometimes, the underlying interconnections are curiously logical: a sheet on which he writes a poem concerning the difficulties he has expressing his gratitude also contains the draft of a letter to the artist-biographer Giorgio Vasari reflecting the painful indebtedness Michelangelo felt for being dependent on Vasari for the building of the Laurentian Library, while next to the letter he has produced some tiny sketches of his preliminary ideas for the Library's famous staircase. At other times, the connections are more difficult to plot: there is a sheet, for instance, on which we can trace his attempts to compose a poem concerning grief over the death of a loved one, but the writing is interrupted at a particularly painful moment in the metaphysical conceits of the verse; at this point, he apparently turns the sheet ninety degrees and produces a portrait of his own left hand, the index finger precisely touching the truncated problem spot in the rhyme.

The chapters that follow will pursue two interlocking trajectories. In one sense, we are moving through the material and methodological field of these image-and-word documents from simpler to more complex questions. The first chapter introduces the problem historically, principally by using the example of Leonardo—more famous than Michelangelo as regards the production of pages with both drawing and writing on them—to outline the formal and semantic possibilities of such composite work. Then, our focus shifting more exclusively to Michelangelo, the second chapter studies the medium of paper itself as it receives various forms of inscription within the artist's workplace. From there, we move along a scale of increasingly complicated relationships among these markings. Chapter Three concerns itself with those (few) instances where Michelangelo clearly understood the words as directly parallel to the images, while Chapter Four treats one particular piece of text—the artist's signature—which has its own quite traditional relationship to an adjoining image.

From that point, more directly than in the earlier chapters, we pick up the other trajectory in the sequence of the book: namely, the chronological arc of Michelangelo's long career. Chapter Five seeks at once to complicate the question of the artist's pages by treating some of his most perplexingly multifarious productions on paper; at the same time, it concentrates on a youthful moment in his career—essentially, the first decade of the sixteenth century—when he is moving somewhat uncertainly among a set of divergent commissions. Next, in the

chronological sense, Chapter Six takes up a moment (mostly) in the 1520s when he is working in closer connection than before with other people—pupils, friends, patrons—and when his production of text and image reflects both the practicalities and the passions of a fundamentally solitary man who has become powerful, sought after, and dependent upon a wide range of other people. The seventh chapter takes another leap in the calendar to the final decades of the artist's life; but it also turns the tables on the word-and-image problem by examining a manuscript of poetry in which, contrary to most of the sheets we consider in this book, the drawings rather than the words occupy the margins. Then, having arrived at some of the most speculative sets of connections, we end with a chapter that looks back on the problems of mapping these associations and seeks models for such an analysis.

When Michelangelo's great biographer, J. A. Symonds, declared that the drawings represent "the involuntary revelation of the artist's soul," he was absolutely right; but, by thinking merely of the images, he was considering only half the picture. With these pieces of paper in front of us, with a unitary vision of text and picture together, and with an awareness of this material as something like the sedimented archaeological strata of Michelangelo's creativity, we can almost literally read the artist's mind.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This is the place where, in time-honored fashion, an author expresses thanks to those colleagues, mentors, students, friends, and institutions who have helped make the work possible. But I want to begin by recognizing a different set of persons, individuals whom I could not (or, at any rate, *did* not) meet in person but whose work has left such an impact on my own efforts that mere footnoting in fine print at the back of this book will not suffice. Michelangelo has enjoyed a legacy of scholarly expositors truly worthy of his genius. I could not imagine doing the work I've attempted here without long and close attention to Howard Hibbard's graceful and yet incisive writing, J. A. Symonds's ever-inspiring biographical portraiture, Leo Steinberg's bold revisionism, Johannes Wilde's and Paola Barocchi's magisterial connoisseurship, or Charles deTolnay *passim*. Which is not to say that those scholars whom I have had the privilege of knowing personally, as well as reading, have been any the less inspiring. It has been a remarkable privilege to be acquainted with such an honor roll of *michelangelisti* as James Ackerman, Carmen Bambach, Paul Barolsky, Paul Joannides, James Saslow, David Rosand, and David Summers.

Then there are persons whose affection and respect, alongside their own scholarly brilliance, place them outside every attempt to organize this set of recognitions into neat categories. I could write a memoir on each of them, but I will grant myself merely the pleasure of recording their names: Jeff Dolven, Rona Goffen (who left us far too soon), Anthony Grafton, Sean Keilen, Irving Lavin, Marilyn Lavin, Glenn Most, Alexander Nagel, Alexander Nehamas, Stephen Orgel, Larry Silver, Nigel Smith, Benjamin Taylor, and—alphabetically last, but first among those whose example and whose help inspired the present efforts—William Wallace. Yet another unclassifiable debt is owed to Chris King, master editor, cheerleader, scourge of flabby prose, and, not least, provider of this book's title.

There are many other forms of intellectual and personal generosity that have illuminated this project. It has been a pleasure to be working in overlapping fields with Cammy Brothers and Deborah Parker. An exhibition and conference at Syracuse University in 2008, organized by Gary Radke, provided just the right set of stimuli, both visual and cerebral. Other speaking engagements have been equally beneficial: at Cornell, Northwestern, at Penn (twice!), at the Università di Tor Vergata, and at the late lamented Villa Spelman of the Johns Hopkins University. Among the many people to be thanked for those opportunities are Michael Cole, Jonathan Culler, Marco Ruffini, Peter Stally-brass, Claudia Swan, and Susan Weiss. My own various cohorts within Princeton—colleagues in the Department of Comparative Literature, in the Committee on Renaissance Studies, and in the Society of Fellows, among other places—were subjected to a near glut of exposures to this material, and their responses were inspiring: I would mention especially Sandra Bermann, Bianca Finzi-Contini Calabresi, James Clark, Jonathan Gilmore, Mary Harper, Ben Kafka, Carol Rigolot, Gideon Rosen, and (especially) Susan Stewart, who was the first to suggest that a marginal (so to speak) topic like this could be a whole book unto itself.

On the subjects of this book (as on many other subjects) I have probably learned more from my students than they have from me. It all began twenty years ago at the University of Michigan, when I gave a Michelangelo seminar whose brilliant members included two

Jonathans: Binstock and Brownstein. Far more recently, an undergraduate seminar on Michelangelo that I taught at Princeton kept my own flame alive; among that group, I want especially to cite Joshua Black, Nora Gross, and Trevor Rudge. Then there is the extraordinary roster of doctoral students—and dear friends—with whom I have had the privilege of sharing the field of Renaissance studies, including J. K. Barret, Will Evans, Robert Glass, Matthew Harrison, Abigail Heald, Andrew Hui, David Landreth, Philip Lorenz, Joseph Moshenska, Daniel Moss, Cynthia Nazarian, Gerard Passannante, Alana Shilling, and Leah Whittington.

A book is also a chapter in one's life, and I could not perform the pleasant ritual of these thanks without talking about a magical Roman year—*another* magical Roman year!—spent in the joyous precincts of Via Madonna dei Monti. If the names of my colleagues and companions from that time—Paolo Alei, Vincenzo Anelli, Sergio Bonetti, Daniele Cernilli, Massimo d'Alessandro, Linda Davidson, Carmela Franklin, Nadia Fusini, Roberto Gigliucci, Rosalba Spagnoletti, Paolo Zaccaria—deserve citation, as they most surely do, no less credit is due to those marvelous people who made up the texture of our daily life, whether for producing *gnocchi* on Thursday or advising us about the right way to fix the elevator, or understanding the ways of acquiring the right *tessera*, or pouring the perfect glasses of Tokay or Barbera: I raise glasses to them all.

A book is also the product of its author's good fortune in receiving the cooperation of scholarly institutions; and, with a text like this one, which draws upon the precious resources of museum collections half way across the world, that help has been uniquely crucial and lavishly offered at every turn. My gratitude to Paolo Vian at the Vatican Library; to Pina Ragionieri, Elisabetta Archi, and Elena Lombardi at the Casa Buonarroti; to Hugo Chapman at the British Museum; to Carel van Tuyll and Rosemond Dehedin at the Louvre; to Karine Sauvignon, Kate Heard, and Timothy Wilson at the Ashmolean; and to Julian Brooks and Laura Patrizi at the Getty. It is also a pleasure to thank Laura Giles at the Princeton Art Museum, both for her intellectual support and for the opportunity to view the splendid collection that she oversees.

But a book's most important institution is its publisher, and, even had I not already exhausted my thesaurus, I would be helpless to match my thanks to what the staff of the Princeton University Press deserves. Hanne Winarsky rescued this book when it threatened to become orphaned, and she went on to bestow upon it one of the nicest rooms in the house: I cannot say enough about her intellectual grip, her tireless energy, her imagination, and her loyalty in seeing to its completion a very taxing project in a time of difficulty. No less is true of her colleagues: Christopher Chung, Terri O'Prey, Tracy Baldwin, Eva Jaunzems, and Christie Barros have worked with precision, with efficiency, and with good humor, dealing with an author who was not only very demanding but also four thousand miles away. The secret in all of this is that there is a special joy in working with colleagues at one's own university—particularly *these* colleagues and *this* university—signalled also by the generous support given to the publication by Princeton's Department of Art and Archaeology.

Two final acknowledgments, one joyous, the other sorrowful. Nick Barberio is not only my beloved partner, he also possesses one of the world's best pairs of eyes; I would never wish to look at Michelangelo (or anything else) without his vision accompanying mine. Finally, this volume is dedicated to the memory of my cousin, Jon Koslow, stalwart man of business, intellectual, *bon vivant*, and for so many years my surrogate little brother and indispensable companion. When introducing him, I used to say that I remembered the day he was born; it is one of my great sadnesses that I must now remember the day he died. This book is for Jon and all the many friends who miss him.

MICHELANGELO
A LIFE ON PAPER

1
HIEROGLYPHS OF THE MIND

The simplicity of a sketch, the comparative rapidity with which it is produced, the concentration of meaning demanded by its rigid economy of means, render it more symbolical, more like the hieroglyph of its maker's mind, than any finished work can be. . . . If this be true of all artists, it is in a peculiar sense true of Michelangelo.

—J. A. Symonds, *The Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti*, 1893[1]

The bald, clean-shaven man, with formidable frown, nut-cracker nose and chin . . . seem[s] to have typified for Leonardo vigour and resolution, and so he becomes the counterpart of that other profile which came with equal facility from Leonardo's pen—the epicene youth. These are, in fact, the two hieroglyphs of Leonardo's unconscious mind, the two images his hand created when his attention was wandering.

—Kenneth Clark, *Leonardo da Vinci: An Account of His Development as an Artist*, 1939[2]

Two celebrated biographers, writing at half a century's distance from each other about two great artists, have recourse to the same metaphor in their attempt to convey the unique status of drawing as it distinguishes itself from the more substantial visual media on which the popular fame of this pair of geniuses mostly resided. Why the hieroglyph? The term had become proverbial ever since the Rosetta Stone, discovered during the Napoleonic campaigns in Egypt, had enabled early nineteenth-century scholars to decipher a system of notation that had fascinated and puzzled Europeans all the way back, indeed, to the lifetimes of these two Renaissance artists.[3]

But Jean-François Champollion is not the only researcher lurking beneath the surface of this art-historical metaphor. Between Symonds's generation and Clark's, a strand of European culture had been revolutionized by a grand postulate according to which each individual was psychically guided by a set of forces as fascinating, and as difficult to decode, as those on any Egyptian tablet. Not only had Sigmund Freud asserted the discovery of the unconscious, and offered up the tools for its decipherment, he had also laid particular stress on the psychic life of great artists—in particular, the two referred to in the above quotations. In fact, he had based his analysis of Leonardo in particular on a dream whose significance depends on the Egyptian hieroglyph for "mother."[4] No surprise, then, that Symonds's "hieroglyph of its maker's mind" becomes Clark's "hieroglyphs of Leonardo's *unconscious* mind." The metaphor they share oscillates between notions of symbolism in the case of the earlier writer, as though the artist had revealed secret meanings in his preliminary work, and notions of psychic process in the case of the later writer, as though the artist's hand possessed a consciousness of its own, capable of bypassing the mind. However we might understand these distinctions, for both Symonds and Clark the message about drawings is clear: grand artistic achievements like the *Mona Lisa* or the *Moses* represent the public face of artistic production, whereas sketches (and the sketchier the better) represent the artist's interior life, even in ways of which the artist himself may not be aware.

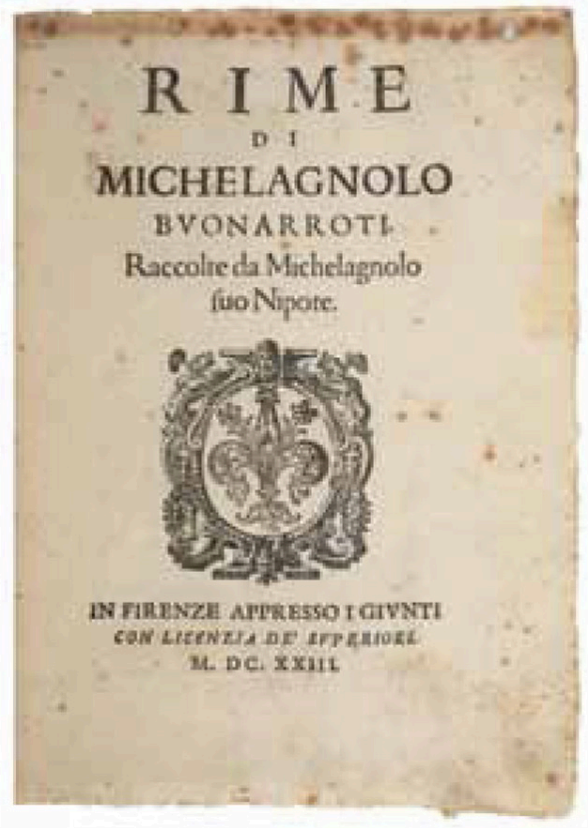
As it happens, the history of art has a two-thousand-year jump on Freud in this mode of thinking. "It is an exceedingly rare thing, and worthy of memory," says Pliny in the *Natural History*,

> that the last works of artists and the pictures they leave uncompleted, such as the Iris of Aristides, the Tyndaridae of Nicomachus, the Medea of Timomachus, and the Venus of Apelles, are held in greater admiration than their completed pieces, because in these works it is possible to observe the outlines that remain [*liniamenta reliqua*] and the very thoughts [*cogitationes*] of the artists.[5]

It should come as no surprise that this passage fascinated two writers on the cusp between Classicism and Romanticism, with Hume finding in it the principle of pain that is necessary for aesthetic pleasure and Diderot the notion that *le génie s'éveille au milieu des ruines*.[6] But this account of artistry was in place long before the Enlightenment, operating on the same coordinates as those of Symonds or Clark. On the one hand, there are the *liniamenta reliqua*, the preliminary marks of half-finished work; on the other, the postulate of the *cogitationes*, which may refer to the program that was to be realized in the finished picture or else to the mental image that preceded and generated the final work. However these terms are to be understood, it is clear that there is a fragmentary, hidden, or invisible medium that can tell deeper truths than the finished product, but only if properly decoded. Drawings-as-hieroglyphs, then, promise some sort of key to the full internal process of the artist's creative labor.

But there is another side to the metaphor, suggesting something of which even Symonds and Clark may not be entirely conscious. A hieroglyph is, to be sure, a picture; but a hieroglyph is also *writing*. It is, in other words, surely no coincidence that this term should be used in relation to two visual artists who were also well known for producing considerable quantities of text. Leonardo was, of course, a compulsive writer, covering some fifteen thousand sheets of notebook paper with his famous mirror script, which in reality was probably nothing more exotic than an adaptation to left-handedness but which has helped generate several centuries of mystical aura around him (Figure 1-1).[7] The topics of his interest range broadly: literature, mythology, aesthetics, anatomy, technology, and, above all, the workings of nature. Added together—though, interestingly, these manuscript pages were *not* added together in any systematic way until the nineteenth century—they provide the foundation for Leonardo's identity as "Renaissance Man," and indeed for the very concept of the early modern genius as a *uomo universale* rather than a specialist.

1-1. Leonardo da Vinci, studies for water apparatuses. Codex Arundel, fol. 24v. British Library


RIME
DI
MICHELAGNOLO
BVONARROTI.
Raccolte da Michelagnolo
suo Nipote.
IN FIRENZE APPRESSO I GIVNTI
CON LICENZIA DE' SVPERIORI.
M. DC. XXIII.

1-2. Title page of the 1623 edition of Michelangelo Buonarroti's poetry from the Guido Mazzoni Pamphlet Collection located in the Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University

This is not a book about Leonardo, of course, and if I pass quickly to that other multiply talented genius, it is partly because Michelangelo's status as a producer of text has received less attention than Leonardo's. Michelangelo, too, was an assiduous writer: three hundred poems; five hundred letters; thousands of *ricordi*, or memos; many pages of conversation transcribed (or invented) by others; and the promise of various discussions concerning art theory and practice, one of which seems to have been conceived as a response to Dürer's *Four Books on Human Proportion*.[8] Not that we should be dazzled by mere statistics. Considering the prose writing of artists from Ghiberti to Cellini, and the poetry of others from Raphael to Bronzino, it may almost have been the norm for painters and sculptors to exercise their skills at language.[9] And, if the modern reception of Michelangelo has marginalized his writing, the situation within his lifetime was no different. His contemporary biographers collect every scrap of information about his work in the visual arts, but mention his writing only briefly; it took sixty years after his death for his collected poems to be published, and then in a rather bastardized form (Figure 1-2). Even when—on the occasion of his grand state funeral, for instance (Figure 1-3)—the celebratory emphasis is upon his multiplicity of talents, the range is limited to sculpture, painting, and architecture, with poetry mostly left out of the mix.[10]

There is, however, another way of understanding Michelangelo's relation to writing, which may distinguish him from most of the other artists who dabbled in text. The artist's contemporary biographers, Vasari and Condivi, may not narrate the production of the Master's sonnets and madrigals in the way they follow the stages of the Julius Tomb, but they both

assert triumphantly that he was passionately devoted to Dante and Petrarch—indeed, that he could recite their works from memory.[11] Even if that proposition is somewhat mythic and hagiographical (though, as it turns out, possibly true), it points to an aspect of his career that may be as significant as the actual production of texts. Whatever quantity of words he put down on paper or published in books, Michelangelo came to be understood in his lifetime as a literary man. A flood of textual activity from the 1540s attests to this status. The artist's Florentine anti-Medicean friends Luigi del Riccio and Donato Giannotti plan (though they do not live to execute) a collected edition of his poetry. Giannotti composes dialogues, heavily indebted to Plato, narrating a stroll through Rome in conversation with Michelangelo, in which the artist is given a starring role in thorny discussions concerning Dante's *Commedia*. In a quite different vein, but with similar literary associations, a story is told about an event in Florence when both Leonardo and Michelangelo were invited to expound Dante—the (unsurprising) pay-off being that Leonardo was charming while Michelangelo was rude. Another close associate, the humanist Benedetto Varchi, commences his inaugural lectures for the Florentine Academy with a close analysis of a Michelangelo sonnet ("Non ha l'ottimo artista . . ."), in which metaphors of sculpting are used to elucidate amorous desire.[12]

1-3. Giorgio Vasari, tomb of Michelangelo. Santa Croce, Florence

It is reasonable to approach some of this material with a measure of skepticism. In the absence of tape recorders, the literary form of the dialogue, from Plato to Castiglione and beyond, can never be taken as a literal chronicle of fact: indeed, it is possible that no such meetings as these ever took place. Furthermore, in all of this third-party celebration of Michelangelo as literary man, there may be an overriding propaganda motive, relating either to the republican sentiments of Florentine exiles or, quite contrariwise, to attempts at glorifying the later Medici as patrons of a grand, multidisciplinary academy. Yet we must not overlook the central role that Michelangelo was being assigned in these kinds of projects. Giannotti's *Dialogue* begins with Luigi del Riccio and Antonio Petreo in a heated discussion concerning the amount of time Dante spent on his epic three-part journey—a theme that had

already become a topos of literary criticism, given the poem's contradictory time schemes, as between the sacred calendar (from Holy Thursday to Easter Sunday) and the actual onrush of episodes in its hundred cantos. But as soon as they run into Michelangelo and Giannotti on their own walk from the Campidoglio, the interpersonal dynamic undergoes a change, moving from free disputation almost to lecture mode, in which Michelangelo is understood as the real Dante expert who will furnish the right answers and, insofar as possible, harmonize differences of opinion. Michelangelo's magic touch is even more vividly chronicled in the second dialogue (much briefer but with issues of greater political moment), concerning Dante's punishment of Brutus and Cassius, whom he had placed at the lowest pit of hell for participating in the assassination of Julius Caesar. This group of conversants, after all, is sentenced to living in exile among Rome's imperial residues precisely because of their opposition to the absolutist designs of the Medici back in Florence. That Dante should have declared tyrannicide to be the gravest sin of all—equal to Judas's betrayal of Christ—can hardly sit well with them. Only one man can be assigned the impossible task of squaring this political error with a passionate love for both the beauty and the truth of the *Commedia*; and Michelangelo, in a quite complicated pirouette of argumentation, proves equal to the challenge.

How Michelangelo manages this piece of reasoning, by turning Brutus into an allegory and by suggesting that Julius Caesar would have been a lesser tyrant than the successors who were installed as a result of the assassination, is less important than the fact that both concord and truth, on a subject both political and literary, are being offered up by an individual whose worldwide fame is in the quite separate field of the visual arts. In a similar set of moves, Varchi, by launching his literary and humanistic exercise with the "Non ha l'ottimo artista" sonnet, casts Michelangelo as the figure whose life and career can epitomize the interrelations among poetry, love, and sculpture. All the better that he can be persistently identified with Dante, owing to their parallel forms of greatness and to the *Commedia*-like scope of the *Last Judgment*: "And, so far as I'm concerned, I do not doubt for a moment that Michelangelo, just as he imitated Dante in his poetry, also imitated him in his artistic works, not only giving them that grandeur and majesty which one sees in the conceptions of Dante, but also exercising his genius so as to do, either in marble or pigment, that which Dante had done in his words and sentences."[13] Varchi's lectures will go on to explore the comparisons, or *paragoni*, between sculpture and painting, and then between art and poetry, always with Michelangelo as a reference point. The artist thus provides the discursive pivot and center for a whole map of culture, allowing him to be canonized as a kind of Überhumanist capable of bridging the gap between the life of the image and the life of the word, even had he never composed any text at all.

Which takes us back to hieroglyphs, the place where picture and writing intersect. Both Leonardo and Michelangelo were visual artists who *did* compose text, famously so; and their operations in these two realms gave ample evidence, already to their contemporaries, that they should be placed within a tradition where image and word, visuality and language, exist in a strenuously interlocking relationship. Such a tradition runs very deep. Among the most frequently quoted pieces of ancient aesthetic theory, both within antiquity and later, are the dictum of Simonides of Ceos to the effect that "a poem is a speaking painting, and a painting is a mute poem" and—even more widely uttered—Horace's somewhat ambiguous *ut pictura poesis*, suggesting that a poem either *is* or *should be* like a picture.[14]

Both before and after those strictures get laid down, there is hardly a single European authority on the subject of poems *or* pictures who doesn't, explicitly or implicitly, interrelate their definitions. Socrates grounds his banishment of poets from the Republic on an argument

that is really about painters and not about poets, while in the *Phaedrus* he declares writing to be analogous to painting in the context of a quite different argument.[15] Cicero in *De inventione* takes the Greek painter Zeuxis' composite likeness of Helen of Troy (derived from the most beautiful features of five separate girls) to explain his own procedure in assembling a book of instructions for speech-making.[16] Quintilian uses the mannered qualities of Myron's *Discobolus* statue to justify verbal *figura*, equating an upright body with literal speech and an artistically arranged body with elegant rhetorical variation.[17] Dante himself describes the highest form of divine communication as *visibile parlare*; Montaigne inaugurates his autobiographical project by announcing that he is *painting* himself (and later throws in the implication that it is a painting *in the nude*); Sir Philip Sidney, struggling among various metaphoric and metonymic descriptors for poetry, finally settles on a *speaking picture*; and Bacon calls words the "images of matter."[18] Practitioners of the visual arts are just as likely as writers to summon up such rhetoric: Alberti refers to narrative paintings as *historiae*; Titian calls his mythological canvases *poesie*[19]; and countless individuals theorizing the making of pictures provide arguments that depend on yet another, similarly ambiguous, Horatian dictum, according to which "pictoribus atque poetis | quidlibet audendi semper fuit aequa potestas" ("poets and painters have always had an equal right to dare whatever they wished").[20]

1-4. Alciati *Emblematum Liber*, Emblem LII, 1577

It is hardly surprising that this last pronouncement, which seemed to offer both kinds of creative artists oblique permission to transcend the limits of merely imitating what they found in nature, should turn up in the voices of both our hieroglyphical artists. In Francisco de Hollanda's *Four Dialogues on Painting*, another possibly fanciful re-creation of artistic table

talk, Michelangelo is made to quote Horace's lines (in Latin), and to discourse at length on the principle of the creative liberty that poets and painters share. Earlier in the same work, the conversants hammer home the idea of crossovers between the pictorial and the verbal arts, declaring, "You may read all Virgil and find nothing in him but the art of a Michelangelo."[21] In the case of Leonardo, we need no recourse to apocryphal utterances, as his notebook pages are covered with passionate praises for painting at the expense of poetry, pursuing arguments based on Horatian suppositions concerning both the freedoms and the restrictions that the *Ars poetica* had rendered central to theoretical debates about the nature of literature and the visual arts.[22] With or without Horace, it is safe to say that both Leonardo and Michelangelo were, were understood to be, and understood themselves to be, operating within an ancient and noble tradition in which the arts of word and picture were subject to complex interrelations.[23]

However those intricacies may be glimpsed in the pages that follow, we are concerned here with picture and text in a more straightforward sense, principally insofar as they can be found next to each other on the same sheets of paper. Not that this physical happenstance in itself constitutes a consistent or definable genre of artistic activity. Renaissance cultural production indeed abounds in cases where words and pictures are placed in this kind of proximity for what are clearly intentional efforts at both contrast and coordination. Cimabue's Pisa Crucifixion apparently included the text of angelic messages to the Virgin Mary, which, according to Vasari, proved that the artist "was starting to shed new light and to open the way to invention by expressing the meaning of his painting with the help of words."[24] At the other end of the period, we have the case of emblem books, and the whole iconographic tradition that lies behind them, where the combination of image and text on the same page—say, a picture of the transformed Actaeon and a poetic moralization concerning the dangers of harboring criminals (Figure 1-4)—has been carefully patterned in such a way that the two media operate in both divergence and complementarity.[25] Nevertheless, the pages that provide the central exhibits in this book do not, for the most part, emerge from that sort of aesthetic premeditation; they tend to be documents in artistic practice, the chance consequences of a creative mentality that spontaneously expressed itself in an unregulated mixture of visual and verbal inscriptions. If the hieroglyph counts as the emblem of this activity, it is not only because of its simultaneous associations with picture and word but also because the hieroglyph has historically signaled some fundamental mysteries of expression.

Kenneth Clark, it will be remembered, construed certain pieces of Leonardo's sketchwork—wordless ones, for the most part—as evidence of unconscious process: they are "images his hand created when his attention was wandering." When we shift our attention to sheets with both picture and text in the same hand, not only does the term "hieroglyph" gain sharper relevance, but the question of conscious and unconscious takes on greater urgency. With those pages before us, we are able to see in what ways our two exemplars can be understood as parallel and in what ways Leonardo indicates rather by contrast why it is that Michelangelo's habit of writing words on his drawings merits a book of its own.

In all the most sophisticated accounts of the history of drawing, Leonardo's work counts as the threshold moment when Renaissance individualism found its triumphant way on to the sketchpad.[26] Draftsmanship, according to this timeline, was no longer solely occupied with the apprenticeship business of imitating pre-existing pattern books or with the attempt to nail down the future shape of a finished product, but rather became the truest expression of an inward vision. History is never so neat as such formulations, nor are great men so unique; still, David Rosand is quite right in his description of Leonardo's drawing as the "handwriting of

the self,"[27] an expression that itself reminds us of connections to textual exercise. The inward turn implicit in Rosand's phrase is based in part on the fact that we possess many sheets with obsessively repeated and elegantly varied figures that point to no plausible commissioned project but, contrariwise, can often be connected to issues we may adduce from the artist's psyche, for which Freud laid down such interesting groundwork. Indeed, though Freud notably did not permit himself much speculation on this kind of drawing, Leonardo's work is filled with what Ernst Gombrich, and many subsequent scholars, have called "doodles"[28] (Figure 1-5), which is a key term in suggesting exactly the sort of aimless mental activity—beyond conscious control and potentially revealing of unconscious concerns—as Freud's own favorite sites of analysis: dreams, jokes, and slips of the tongue.

1-5. Leonardo, two grotesque profiles confronted. Windsor RL12463. The Royal Collection, London

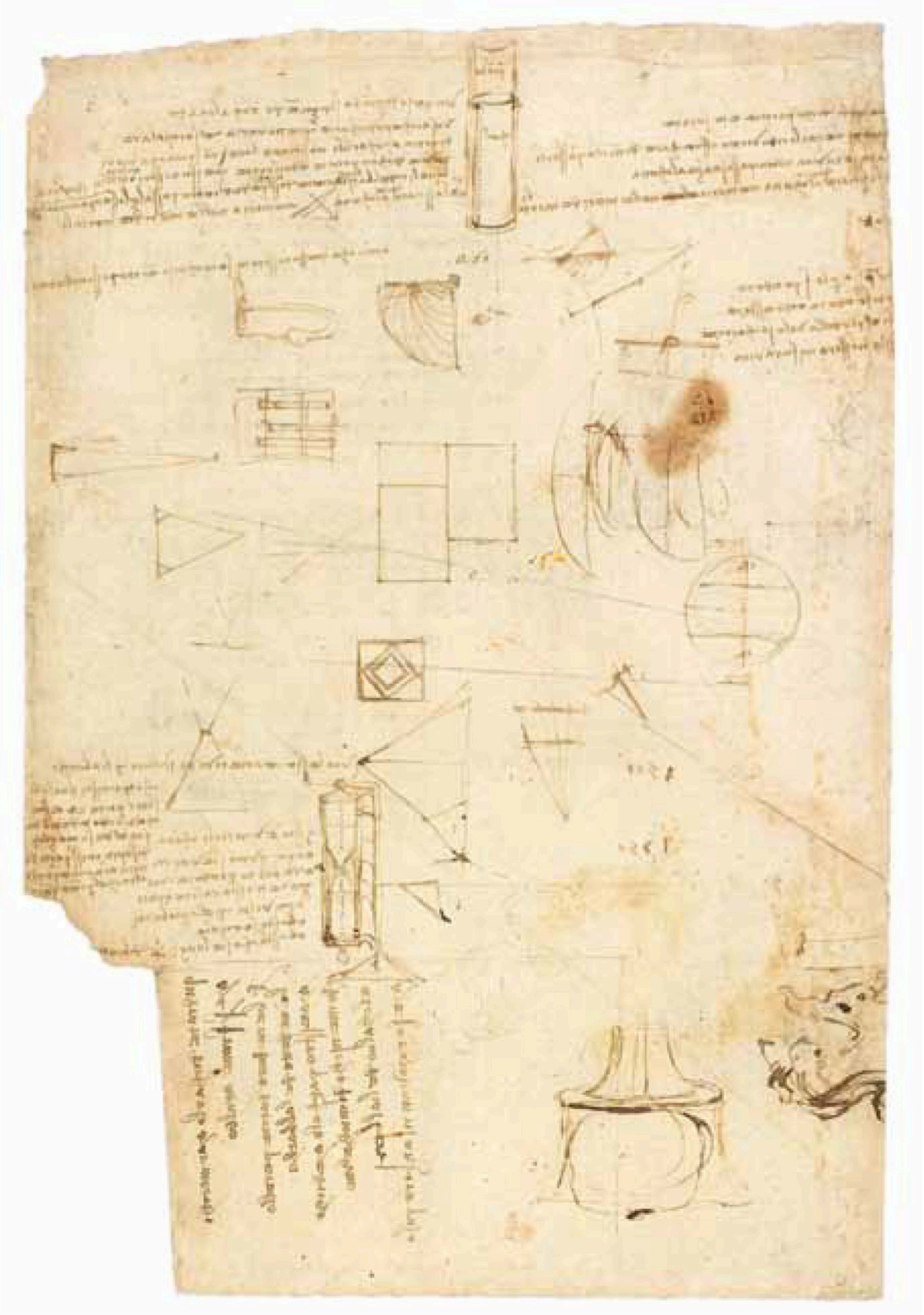
Not that Leonardo was so wholly *un*conscious of these matters. In fact, he discussed the relationship between draftsmanship and the self quite extensively in his notebooks. Among the most insistent themes in this vast treasure-house of written material is a set of strictures against what he takes to be the tendency of artists to represent their own features in their

work. Leonardo's account of this practice, which had already by the fifteenth century been enshrined in the proverb "ogni dipintore dipinge sè" (every painter paints himself), proves to be far more than a complaint about insufficient variety in artists' ways of rendering physiognomy.[29] After reviewing the dangers of habitual and accidental self-portraiture and listing various inward characteristics that get involuntarily transferred from painter to painting along with facial features (including quickness of movement, devoutness, laziness, and madness), he speculates on the underlying principles:

> Having often considered the cause of this defect, it seems to me one must conclude that the soul which rules and directs each body is really that which forms our judgment *before it is our own judgment*. Thus it has developed the whole shape of a man, as it has deemed to be best with long, or short, or flat nose, and definitely assigned his height and shape. The judgment is so powerful that it moves the painter's arm and makes him copy himself, since it seems to that soul that this is the true way to construct a man, and whoever does not do so, commits an error. (Emphasis mine)[30]

What had been a sort of mystical piece of medieval microcosmic lore becomes in these lines an object of scientific inquiry, and Leonardo answers his own question with a quite astonishing proposal. The idea that there is a force governing our bodies that guides "il nostro giuditio inanti sia il proprio giuditio nostro" is poised between Christian notions of a soul and psychological notions that the judgments we make—indeed, the very reality that we perceive—might be rooted in some kind of preconscious condition. And as Leonardo explores the mechanics of this proposition, he seems to have anticipated all the twentieth-century accounts of these artistic productions, crediting them directly to the "arm of the painter" (*move le braccia al pittore*) in such a way as to shortcircuit any sort of deliberate mental agency. Did Leonardo discover Freud's unconscious *avant la lettre*?

What is important here is not so much the possible protomodernity of this claim as the fact that the act of draftsmanship, which would traditionally be understood as operating between the externally determined imperatives of mimesis and the shaping intentions of an individual artist, is being subjected to a third—and more wayward—force, also connected to the individual, but not under his or her control. Equally significant, of course, is the fact that Leonardo finds this element in the mix to be quite threatening. (No surprise, given that the earliest citation we have about the self-replicating painter comes from the sermons of Savonarola.[31]) Unconscious process does not get credit in Leonardo's writings for brilliant invention or unique acts of genius; it is rather circumscribed into the realm of a somewhat deluded painterly narcissism. It has often been suggested, apropos of this set of caveats, that Leonardo was above all expressing anxiety about his own practice and that he was himself guilty of "ogni dipintore dipinge sè."[32] Whatever the truth of that claim, it is clear that he practiced a kind of draftsmanship that was profoundly intimate and personal, and that, with whatever mix of self-consciousness, self-promotion, and self-castigation, he scrutinized that practice in ways that disclose his discomfort with his own habits.



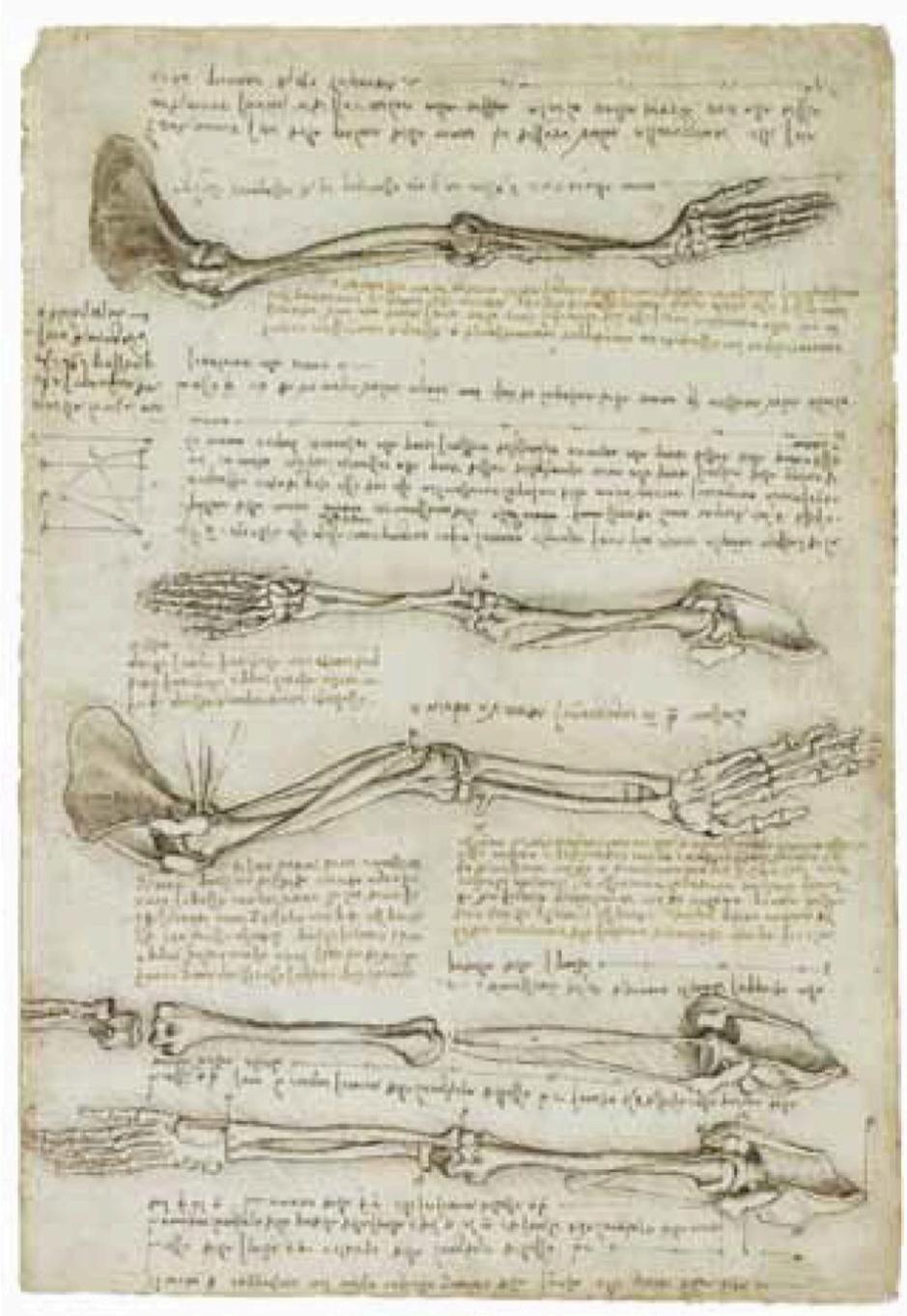
1-6. Leonardo, miscellaneous instruments. Codex Atlanticus 12va. Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan

All of which might be said of Michelangelo as well. More so, in fact, and with a far greater consciousness of the unconscious, as well as a more positive valuation of it. In the case of Leonardo, there is a kind of paradox: on the one hand, he was a doodler; on the other hand, he was a thinker who aspired to the kind of systematic investigative processes that would eventually produce experimental science. In fact, it is often possible to map these oppositions precisely in terms of the relation between picture and text on his manuscript pages. There are, to be sure, many cases where he scribbled either casual or irrelevant notations amidst his visual sketches, including the phrase *dimmi semmai fu fatto chose* ("tell me if ever the thing was done"), which appears on a number of early sketches, or the to-do list of bibliographical authorities inscribed in one corner of a sheet with mechanical instruments (Figure 1-6), or even the indication, placed a few centimeters above a landscape drawing (Figure 1-7), of the exact moment of his father's death (*a dì di luglio 1504, mercoledì a ore 7. . .*), out of which Freud made so much.[33]

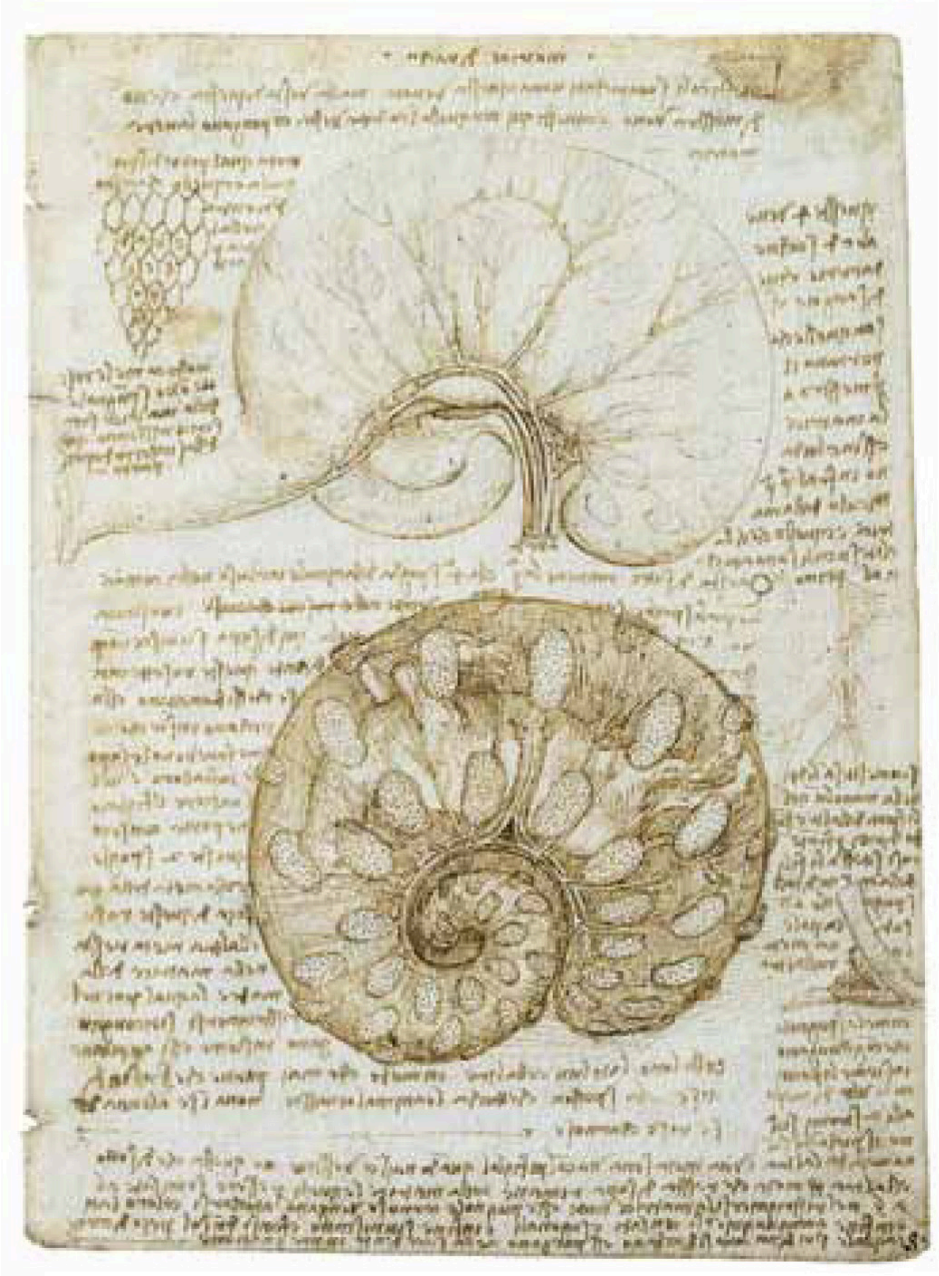
1-7. Leonardo, Arno drawing with memorial of his father's death. c. 1473. Uffizi, Florence

But the vast majority of the pages on which Leonardo set down both pictures and words—the documents that have made him famous for this kind of production—leave the impression of being anything but doodles. It would take a far bigger book than this one (and it is a book that has yet to be definitively written[34]) to do justice to the range of compositional forms among these thousands of sheets, and to the sorts of logic that underlie them. Sometimes descriptive text is exquisitely inlaid among the images to which it refers (Figure 1-8), while at other times the verbal component, though just as closely keyed to the picture, is squeezed haphazardly in what appear to be the figures' accidental surroundings (Figure 1-9). Sometimes the layout of word and image is as straightforwardly explanatory as in the most user-friendly of instruction manuals (Figure 1-10), while at other times the relationship is symbolic in the mode of emblems (Figure 1-11). Sometimes the words bespeak a strenuous pedagogical

purpose aimed at a hypothetical reader, who is to be further aided by the accompanying images (Figure 1-12), while at other times the amalgam is clearly intended for the artist's eyes only (Figure 1-13).[35] Yet what is common to all these cases is that image and text have been conceived as purposefully interrelated. Indeed, it is this double presence, however variously it emerges on the page, that nearly always signals the opposite of the doodle—that is, an attempt to make the kind of definitive statement about nature, technology, or art that requires both the mimetic or diagrammatic qualities of the picture and the discursive or descriptive qualities of the text to nail down the truth. With Michelangelo, the opposite is likelier to be the case: the juxtaposed figure and word tend rather to signal the artist's deepest uncertainties.



1-8. Leonardo, the bones of the arm. Windsor 19000v. The Royal Collection, London

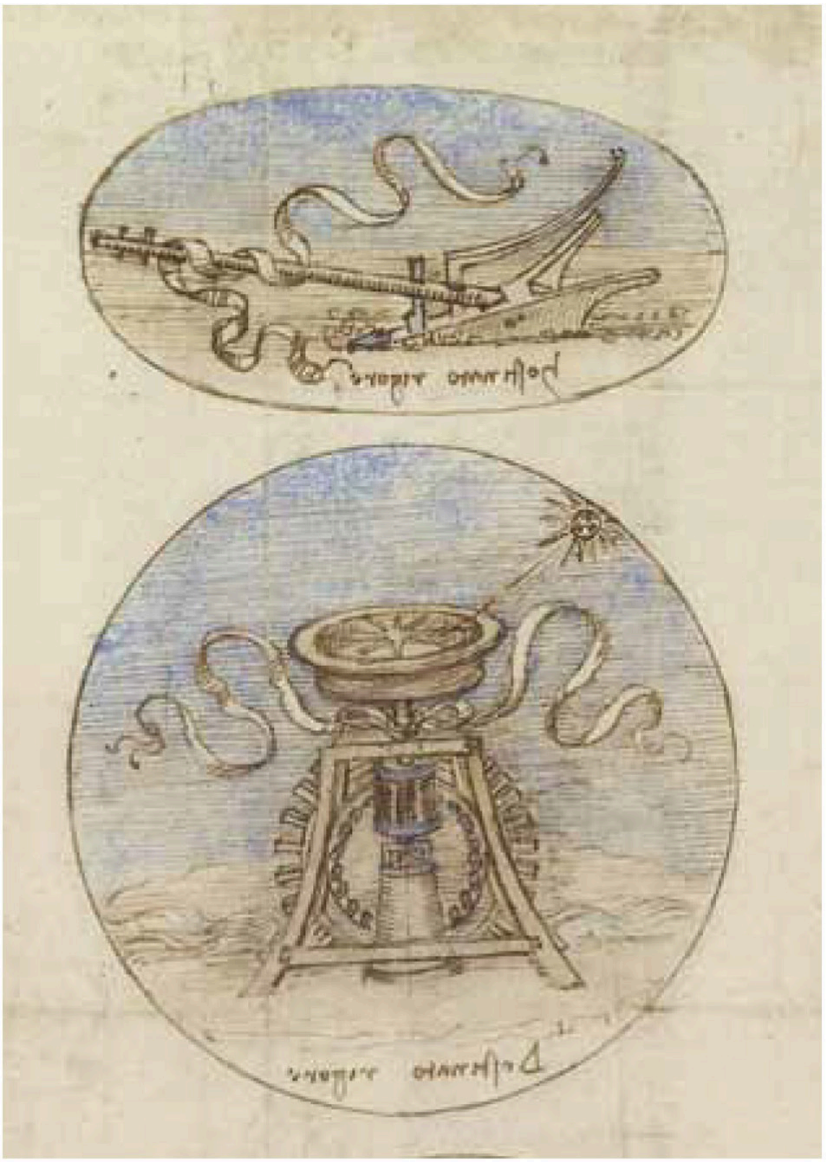


1-9. Leonardo, uterus of a gravid cow. Windsor 19055r. The Royal Collection, London

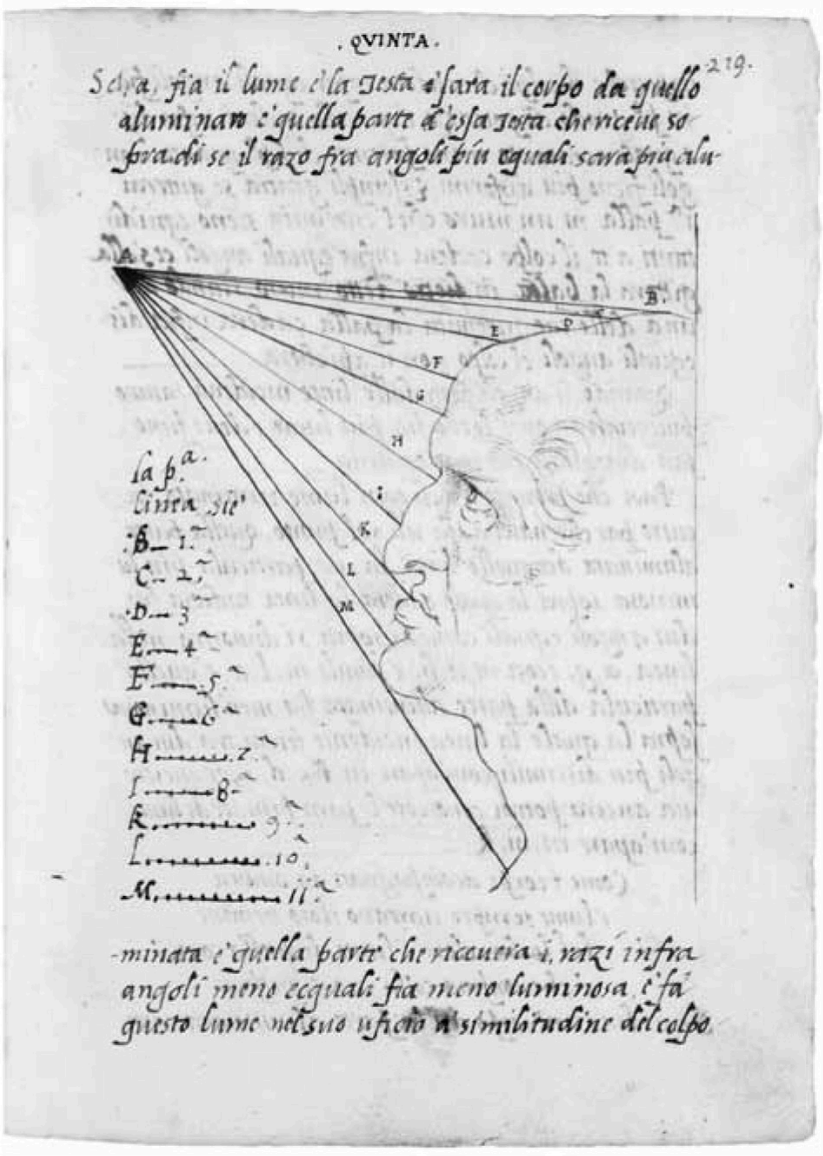
Let us nevertheless hold that tantalizing claim momentarily in abeyance while we establish some sense of the archive in question. The numbers of pages on which Michelangelo composed both text and image are far smaller than those of Leonardo, but they are not inconsiderable. For statistical purposes, one has to begin with some notion of the grand total of extant autograph sheets, about which radical and noisy controversies have swirled for several decades, with estimates ranging as low as two hundred and as high as eight hundred.[36] If the present volume tends to abstain from these debates, it is at least in part because there has been far less controversy about the identification of Michelangelo's handwriting than about the attribution of his picture-making. That in itself points to some significant issues in the relations between word and image, suggesting that individuals who are capable of both activities may identify themselves more unmistakably in their script than in their sketching. At all events, our primary concern here is with pages on which Michelangelo's

hand has been widely detected as both scriptor and draftsman. If we follow what might be considered the mainstream of scholarship—from deTolnay's *Corpus* in the 1970s to the magisterial work of Paul Joannides in the present moment—a total of something like six hundred authentic sheets emerges. By my count, approximately two hundred of these pieces of paper include text.

1-10. Leonardo, device for regulating springs. Madrid Codex I45r. Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid



1-11. Leonardo, two emblems. Windsor 12701. The Royal Collection, London


. QVINTA .
219.
Schya, fia il lume e'la Testa e'sara il corpo da quello
aluminato e'quella parte d'essa Testa che ricerua so
fra di se il razo fra angoli piu equali sara pia alu-
la p.a
linea sie'
B— 1.
C— 2.
D— 3
E— 4
F— 5
G— 6
H— 7
I— 8
K— 9
L— 10
M— 11
-minata e'quella parte che ricouera i razi infra
angoli meno ecquali fia meno luminosa e'fa
questo lume nel suo ufficio a similitudine del colso

1-12. Leonardo, proportions of the face. Codex Urbinas facsimile, p. 112. Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City

1-13. Leonardo, study of mechanics. Paris Codex 83v. Bibliotheque de l'Institut de France, Institut de France, Paris

In other words, one third of the sheets that have been preserved under several centuries of assumption that they constituted Michelangelo's Drawings also constitute a share of Michelangelo's Writings. Like all statistics, these provide a big picture that needs to be shadowed with various little pictures. A not inconsiderable proportion of the two hundred are architectural drawings, and it may be argued that the inclusion of words in the middle of building diagrams is so inevitable as not to prove anything about the habits of a particular artist (though I am not alone in doubting this general proposition).[37] It must also be pointed out that another subset of the two hundred consists of pages from manuscripts principally devoted to poetry.[38] If we were to include *all* poetry sheets in the total, the count would exceed six hundred, and the proportion of those with both words and pictures would drop. On the other hand, if we focus on the literary production itself, it emerges that something like 25

percent of the poems appear at some point on manuscript pages in the company of drawings.[39] In short, no matter how one crunches the numbers, Michelangelo's habit of inscribing both kinds of marks in close proximity on the same sheets is, let us say, striking.

It is also the case that this conjunction has attracted relatively little notice. To be sure, there have been magisterial cataloguing projects focussed upon individual collections of the drawings, like those of Johannes Wilde at the British Museum, Paola Barocchi at the Uffizi and the Casa Buonarroti, and Paul Joannides at the Louvre and the Ashmolean, in which the autograph texts have been rigorously transcribed with the same kind of care as has been lavished on the figural work.[40] Still, it cannot be denied that the traditions of art historical connoisseurship as regards this body of work vastly privilege pictures over words. To cite a notable example, while Charles deTolnay's *Corpus dei disegni* (indispensable and supremely authoritative in many ways) succeeds in documenting the minutest details of each sheet's pictorial contents, only in rare cases do the entries include transcription or discussion of text.[41] Things are not much different on the literary side: Enzo Noè Girardi's exhaustive edition of the poetic texts—still the benchmark in this field, though half a century old—includes every possible variant in Michelangelo's many verbal revisions but relegates the presence of adjacent sketches to brief footnotes.[42]

The issue is not merely about whether picture scholars mention words or word scholars mention pictures; the question is the extent to which these diverse expressions have been construed as part of a single vision of Michelangelo. Needless to say, the vast scholarship on this most widely studied of artists has by no means ignored the fact that we possess an uncommon (indeed, for an early modern individual, almost unique) quantity of verbal documentation, both in his hand and as recorded by those who were close to him. But perhaps because Michelangelo lived a life in which artistic production and personal biography played themselves out so conspicuously together and because this interlocking narrative was so tempestuous—even novelistic—it has been irresistible to focus our attention on the ways in which his inscriptions on paper might be useful in determining the facts. This has applied both to sketches and to writings: a drawing that can be associated with a particular finished product teaches us something about the process that led to that product, and a verbal notation may provide similar clues. Where no such clear genealogy can be posited, the page has proved less interesting.

There is every reason why scholarship has utilized materials in that sort of teleological way. But it is also rather limiting. It is impossible (at least for me) to survey the archive of Michelangelo's work without realizing that on many occasions he produced drawings without having any preconceived goal. Indeed, that may have been his most characteristic state of mind as he sat with pen or chalk in front of a sheet of paper, whether he was contemplating a live model or a wax form or nothing other than his own mental picture gallery. And if that was true when he sketched images, it was even more true when he scribbled words. The fact is that in most cases he was *not* producing these sheets of paper by way of rational purposiveness: we therefore need models for reading them that allow for something more than a narrative of progress toward deliberate goals of artistic production, on projects like the Sistine Ceiling, the Julius Tomb, or the San Lorenzo façade, which (admittedly, for all sorts of good reasons) have dominated the historiography of his life.

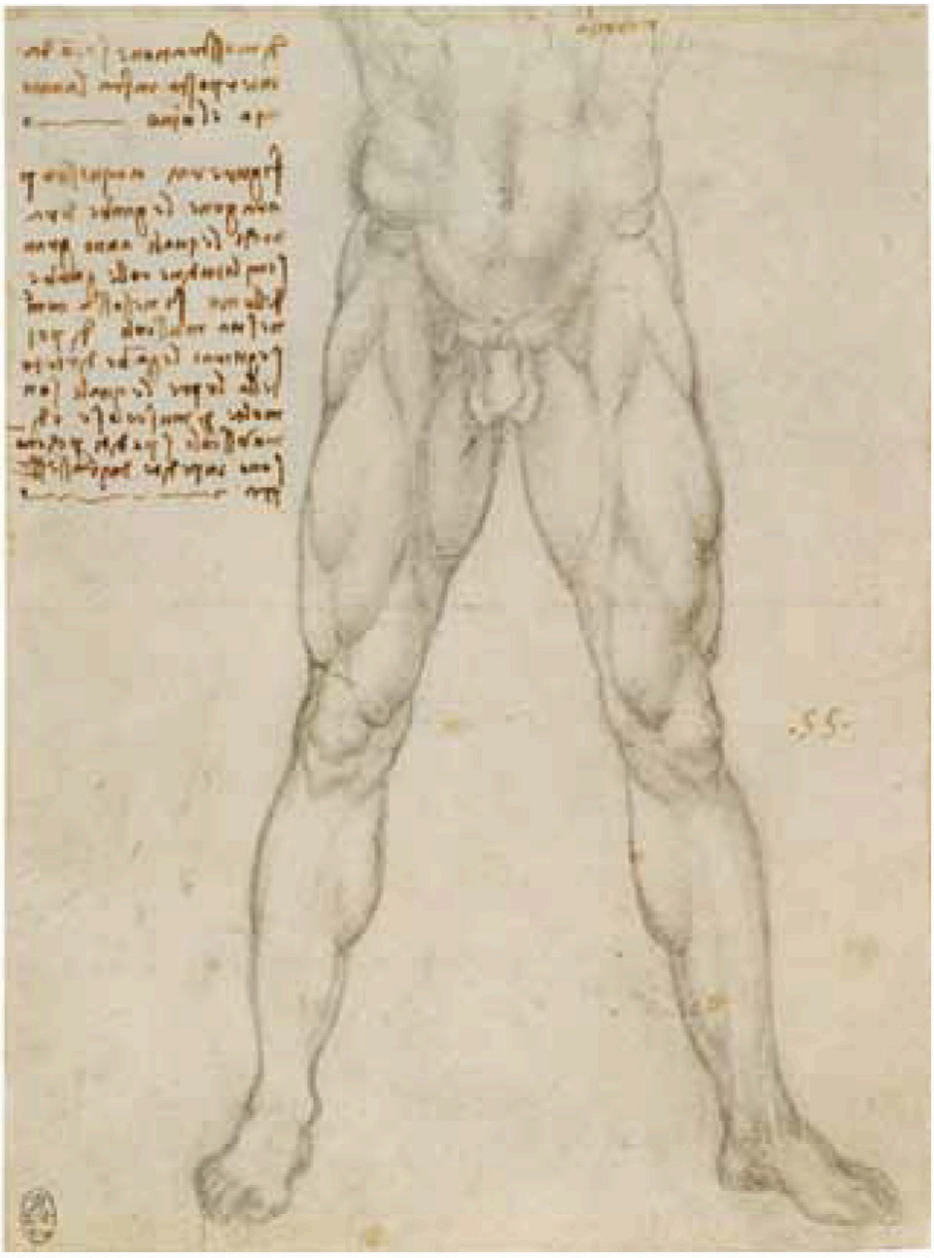
It will require the whole of this book to frame these alternative models of reading, but it seems appropriate to begin exactly where we left off with Leonardo. If, in that case, the conjunction of picture and word is a sign of deliberate and conscious efforts at expression, for

Michelangelo it signals rather the most private, inward, and (indeed) hieroglyphic of moments. One final set of comparisons—on Leonardo's turf, as it were.

Some of Leonardo's most haunting compositions in word and image are those sheets on which he intersperses drawings of the human body with a variety of musings on its structure and on the means whereby it can be graphically or aesthetically reproduced. A Windsor sheet (Figure 1-14), for instance, inscribes several brief essays about the functioning of muscles, bones, and cartilage between and around two very beautiful representations of the leg. On another page (Figure 1-15), the drawing once again concentrates on the muscles, but the writing operates in a more directly pedagogical mode, urging artists to draw human legs by reference to those of frogs.[43] The stunning visual composition of yet another sheet (Figure 1-16) houses a dozen texts that offer minute accounts of the human shoulder, urging the necessity of understanding its deep structure in order to render it artistically. But the first piece of writing on the page (in Leonardo's backwards orientation, the upper right) seems intended neither for professional anatomists nor for professional artists; rather, it registers some striking introspection about the very composite medium that Leonardo is (essentially) inventing:

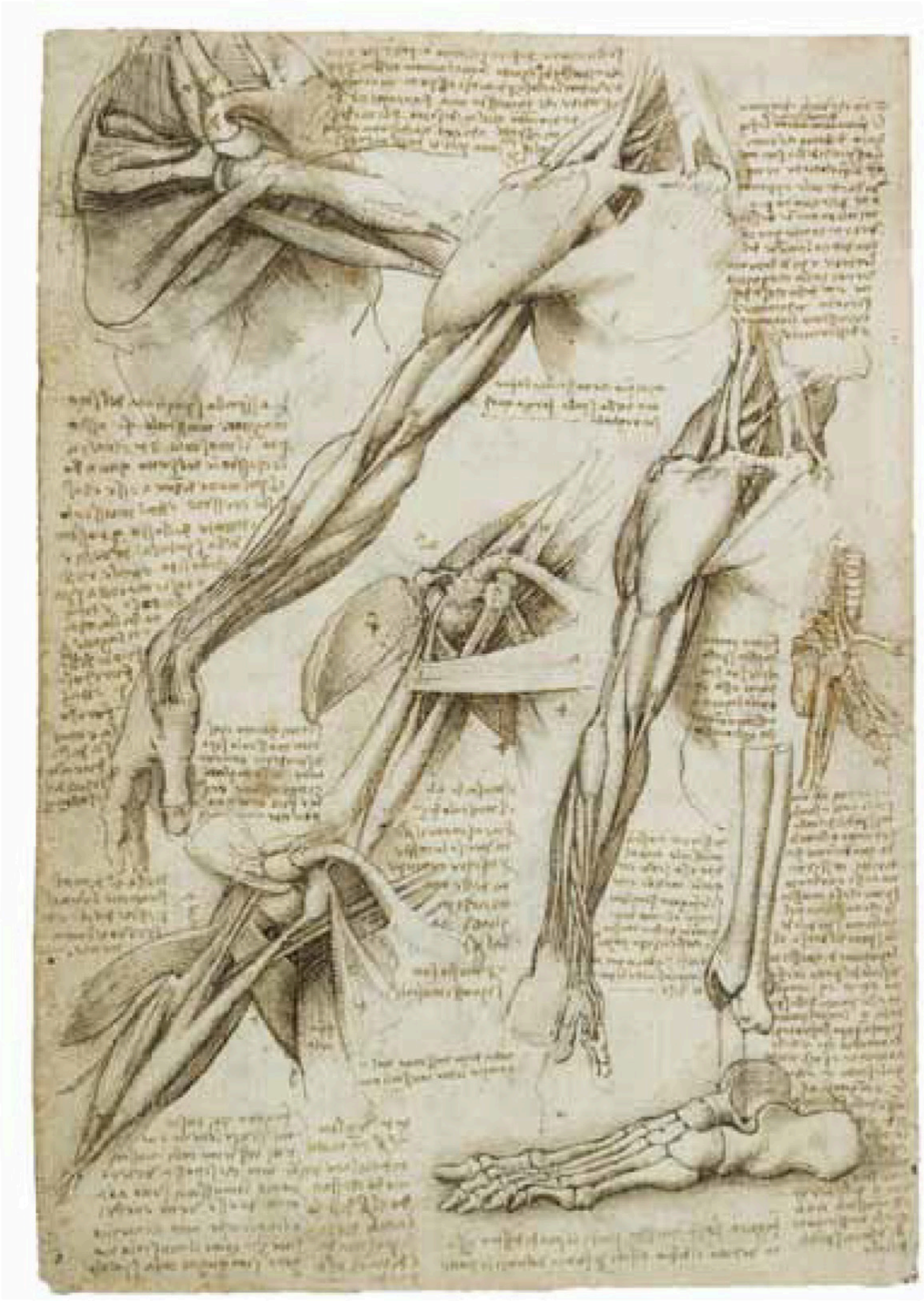
> And you who wish to use words to reveal the shape of man with all aspects of his articulation, abandon any such expectation, because, the more minutely you do your description, the more you will confuse the mind of the reader and the more the reader will lose any recognition of the thing you are describing. Therefore it is necessary both to draw and to describe.[44]

1-14. Leonardo, *écorché* drawings of legs. Windsor 19035v. The Royal Collection, London



1-15. Leonardo, a nude man from the waist down. Windsor 12631r. The Royal Collection, London

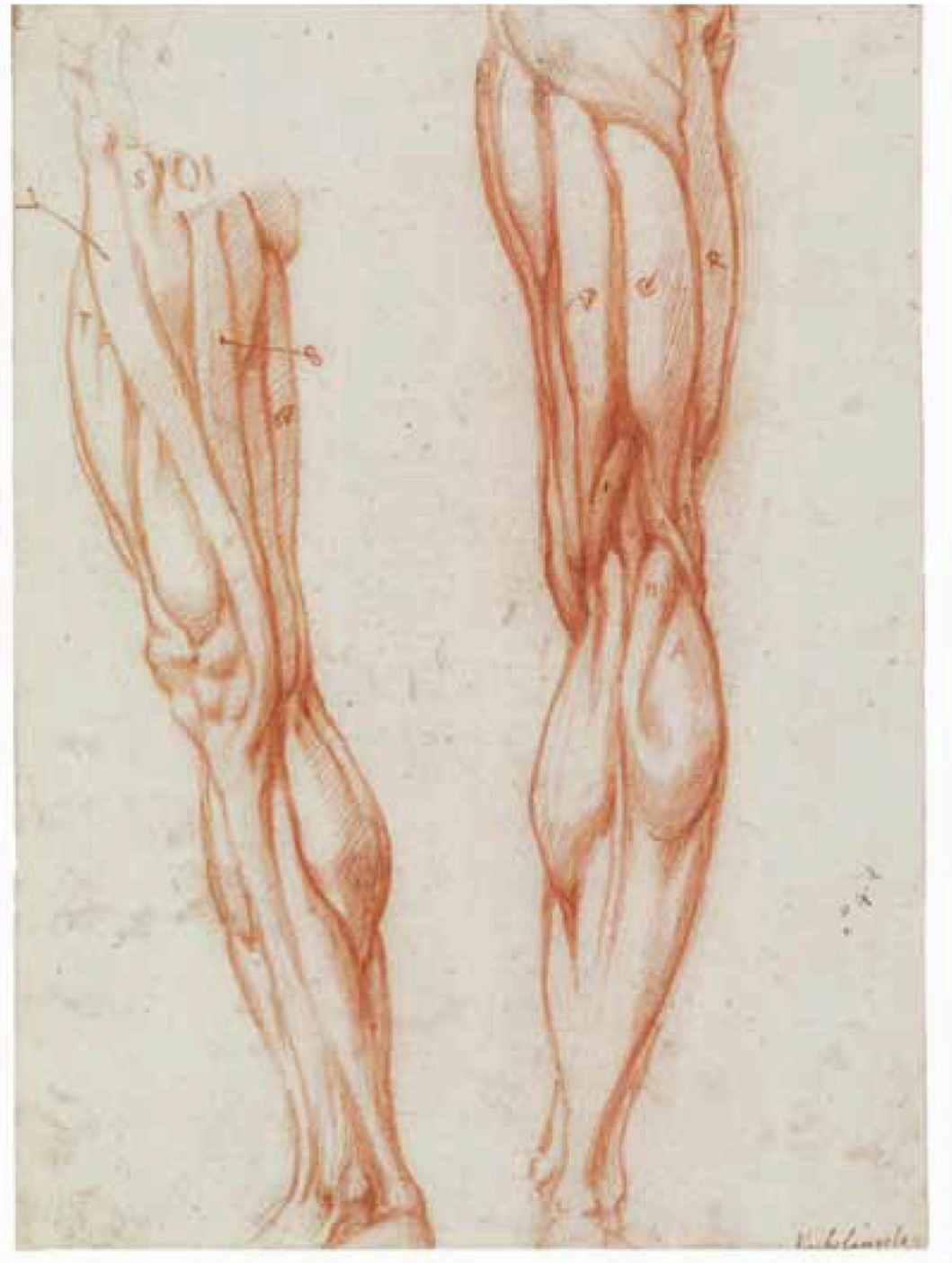
Not only did he understand that his project depended on the interplay of picture and word; he was, in fact, theorizing this relationship. Indeed, he seems to approach this matter with a kind of deconstructive self-consciousness, given his claim that the more words one uses, the less one succeeds in communicating, a notion that sits intriguingly with the fact that he has squeezed in several hundred words on this sheet. All these intricate multimedia compositions can leave no doubt about the grand scope of Leonardo's undertaking. Whether he was imagining a magnificent publication or engaging in some fanatically complete monument for his eyes only,[45] his efforts reveal the ambition to produce a *magnum opus*, virtual or actual, that would interlace art, science, and the human condition across a grid on which language stood (*in bono*, but more often *in malo*) for the realm of cognition and picture stood for experience.



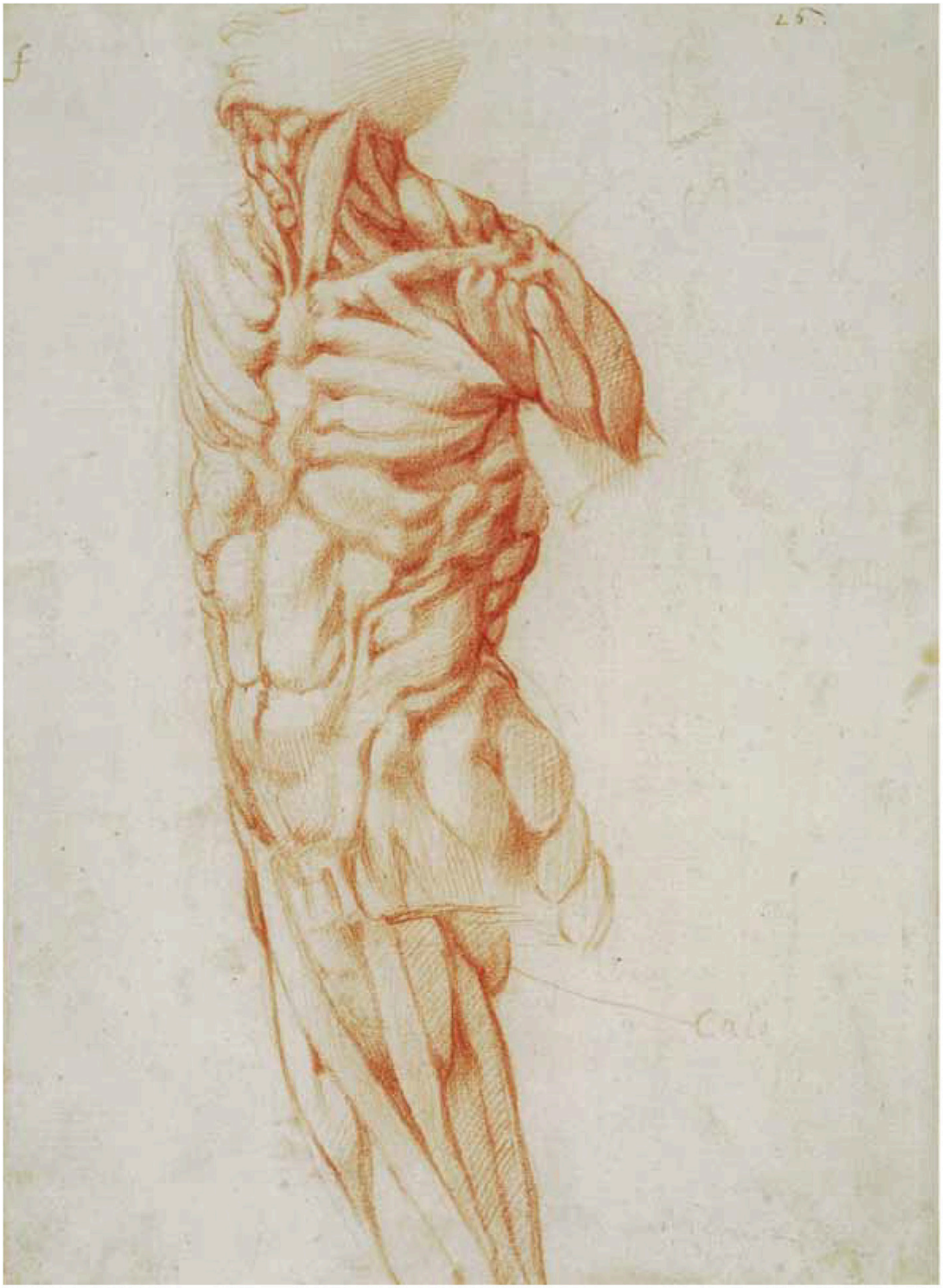
1-16. Leonardo, the muscles of the shoulder and arm, and the bones of the foot. Windsor 19013v. The Royal Collection, London

Though the biographical materials inform us frequently that Michelangelo dissected human and animal corpses, his production of anatomical drawings does not begin to equal those of Leonardo.[46] Nor, despite promises made to both Vasari and Condivi about a book on human proportion, did he ever produce anything like the quantity of text that the elder artist devoted to these subjects. We do, however, possess some examples, particularly a set of *écorché*

studies, mostly in red chalk, now dispersed between Windsor Castle and the Teylers Museum.[47] Some of these (Figure 1-17) include tiny initials pointing to individual muscles, in the fashion of a textbook anatomical illustration, which suggests that they may have formed part of a notebook intended for artistic instruction. The project might be said to recall Leonardo, but if the draftsmanly style is quite different, the relation to language diverges even more. One does not



1-17. Michelangelo, *écorché* drawing, *Corpus* 114r. Windsor 0624. The Royal Collection, London

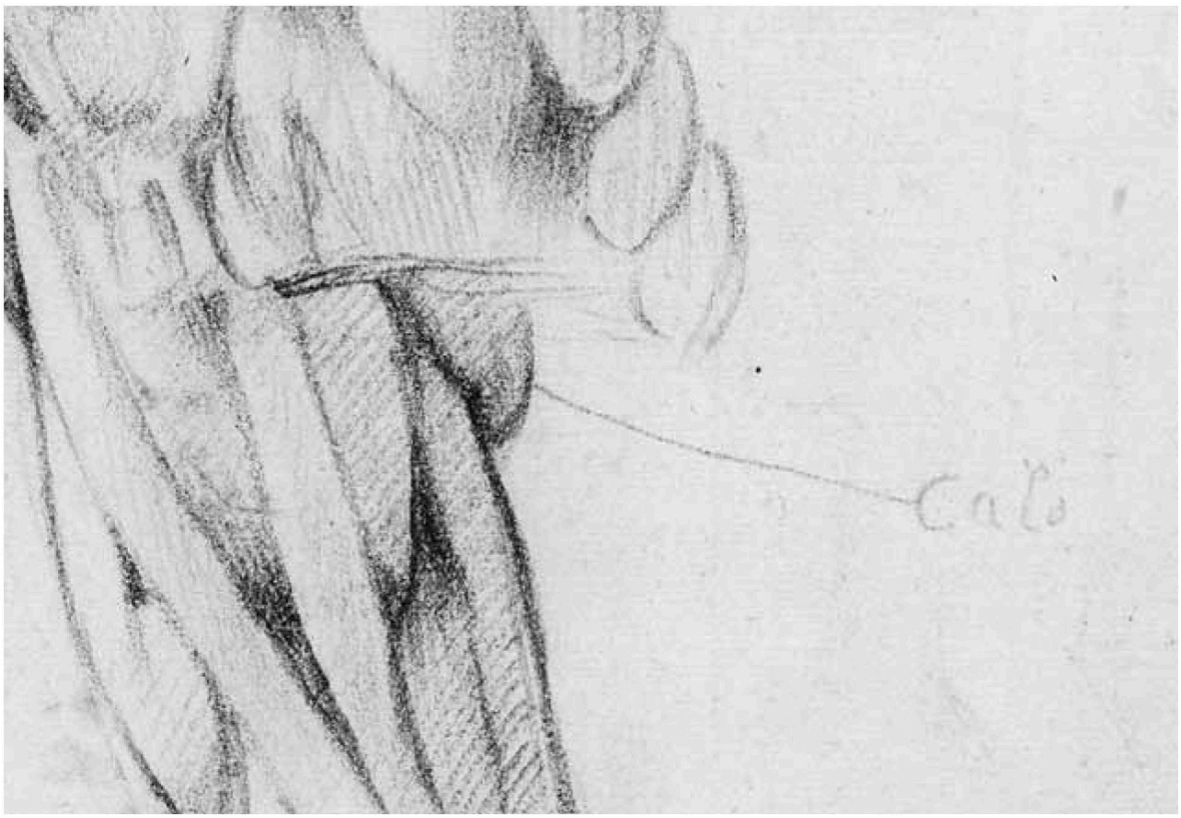


1-18. *(facing)* Michelangelo, *écorché* drawing, *Corpus* 112r. Windsor 0803. The Royal Collection, London

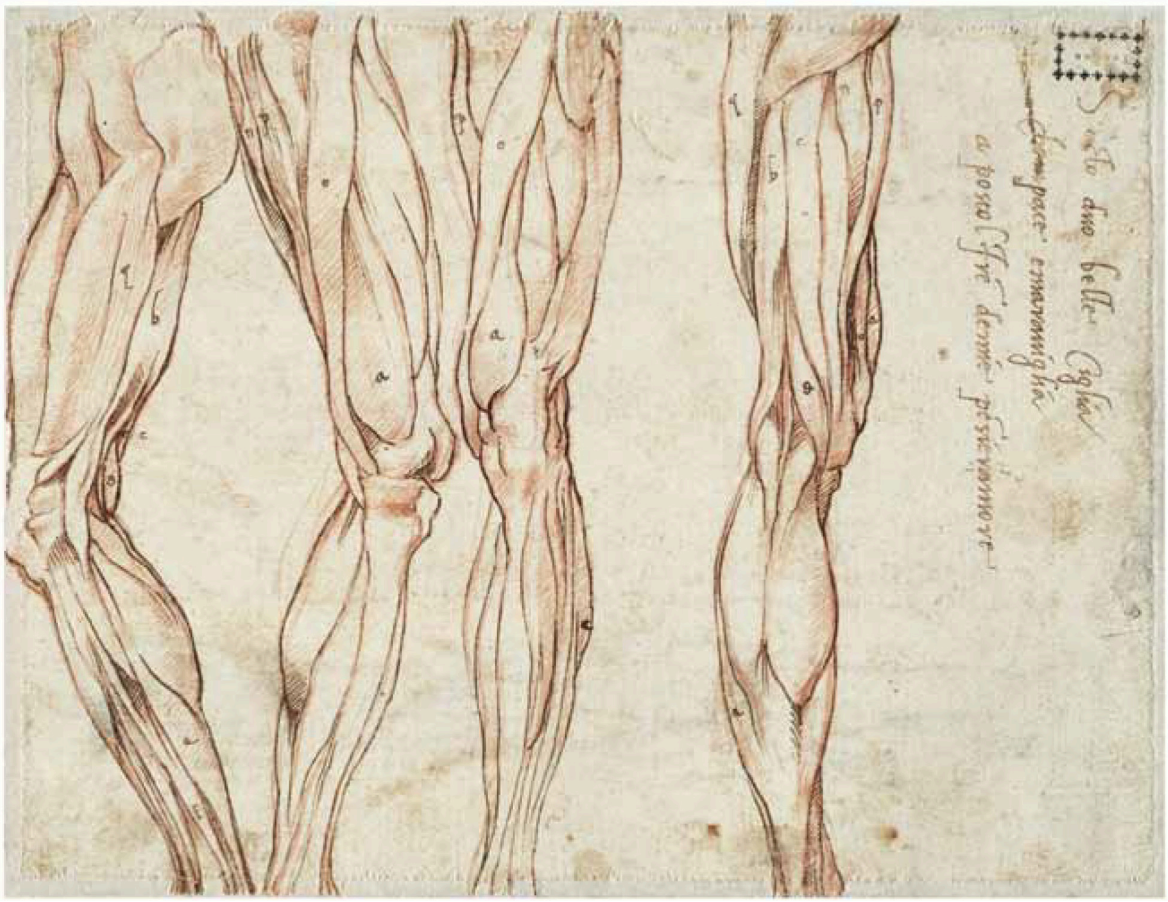
at first notice that the intricately muscled neck, torso, and right leg of a figure seen from the left side (Figure 1-18) includes the artist's handwriting. But on close inspection it becomes

clear that there are two fine lines leading out from the body (like those attached to some of the single letters on Figure 1-17); then one sees that these do, in fact, point to text. Off the shoulder appears the word *braco* (arm); off a spot just below where the left leg is cut short appears the word *culo* (ass) (Figure 1-19).

If, in a volume that will ultimately consider a large body of Michelangelo drawings with his handwriting on them, I begin with this robustly vernacular instance, it is not in order to make a definitive hypothesis about his motives. We cannot be certain why the artist chose to accompany a beautifully finished piece of drawing with a couple of words that were superfluous, frivolous, and—perhaps most striking, because it will prove to be unusual—in a highly informal version of his handwriting. It is tempting to reconstruct a rollicking studio atmosphere in which the Master produced the visual object for sober pedagogical purposes and then added text in order to make fun of the whole enterprise. It would be even more risky (though equally tempting) to conjecture that he was parodying the compositions of that elder colleague who had created such a grandiose word-and-image monument out of human anatomy. Whatever Michelangelo was doing, *my* purpose is to set these two artists' practices against each other—the one based on a massive cognitive and heuristic scheme, the other a mysterious in-joke.



1-19. Detail of Figure 1-18



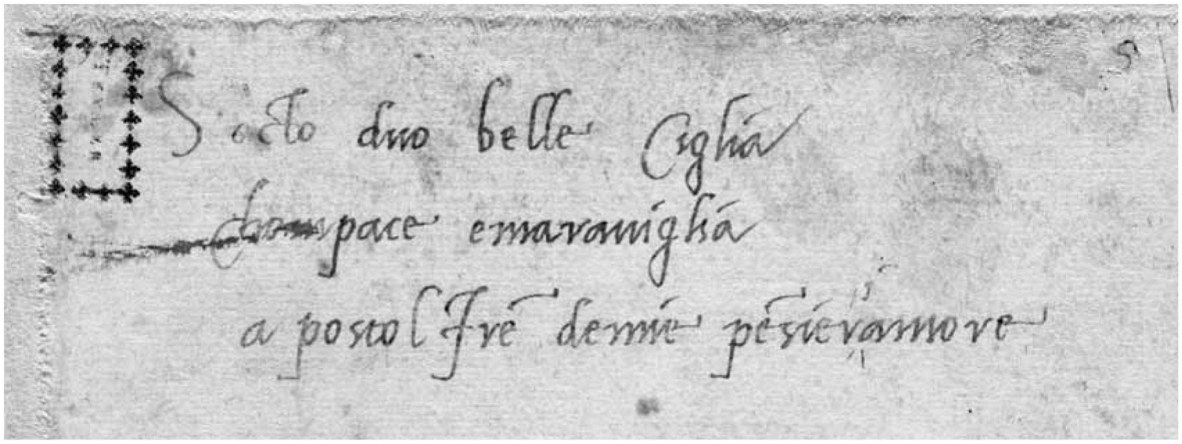
1-20. Michelangelo, *écorché* drawing, *Corpus* 111v. Teylers Museum Haarlem, the Netherlands

The mystery only deepens when we consider the other anatomical drawing that contains text. In this case (Figure 1-20), probably from the same notebook, the red chalk is augmented with brown ink, and individual parts of the anatomy are in fact labeled with initials. The recto has been used in vertical orientation for a series of arms and hands, while the work on the verso, which notably recalls the leg muscle drawings of Leonardo, seems to have been executed in horizontal orientation. But adjacent to those drawings, and in the vertical positioning, Michelangelo has composed three lines of verse (Figure 1-21):

> Socto duo belle ciglia
> chom pace e meraviglia
> a posto 'l fren de' mie pensieri amore.
> Under two beautiful eyebrows
> With peace and wonderment
> Love has placed the brakes on my thoughts.[48]

The handwriting here is far more elegant than that which appeared on the Windsor drawing, as is the sentiment. The scribbled *braco* and *culo*, though stylistically incongruous next to the beautifully composed body parts, were semantically in perfect alignment with them; the relationship of image and word here is quite the opposite: they appear to have absolutely nothing to do with each other. Less than nothing, one might say, since the juxtaposition of four legs with two eyebrows touches on the absurd. It is easy enough to dismiss this field of possible connections and say that Michelangelo liked to use sheets of paper for more than one

purpose, hence producing combinations that were mere happenstance. In some sense, this is true, and many succeeding instances in this volume will revisit these questions.[49] But there is no denying the fact that the artist deliberately rotated and flipped the sheet, such that, however random his various activities might have been, some of them were produced in the presence of the others. That is as far as we can go with this particular bit of the archive. For the moment, let us merely say that on this pair of anatomical sheets we can observe the Leonardo project being attacked on two fronts: in one case, the text is preposterously superfluous, in the other preposterously irrelevant. So far, though, both Michelangelo pages seem to suggest that we have little to learn from analyzing his habit of writing words on his drawings.

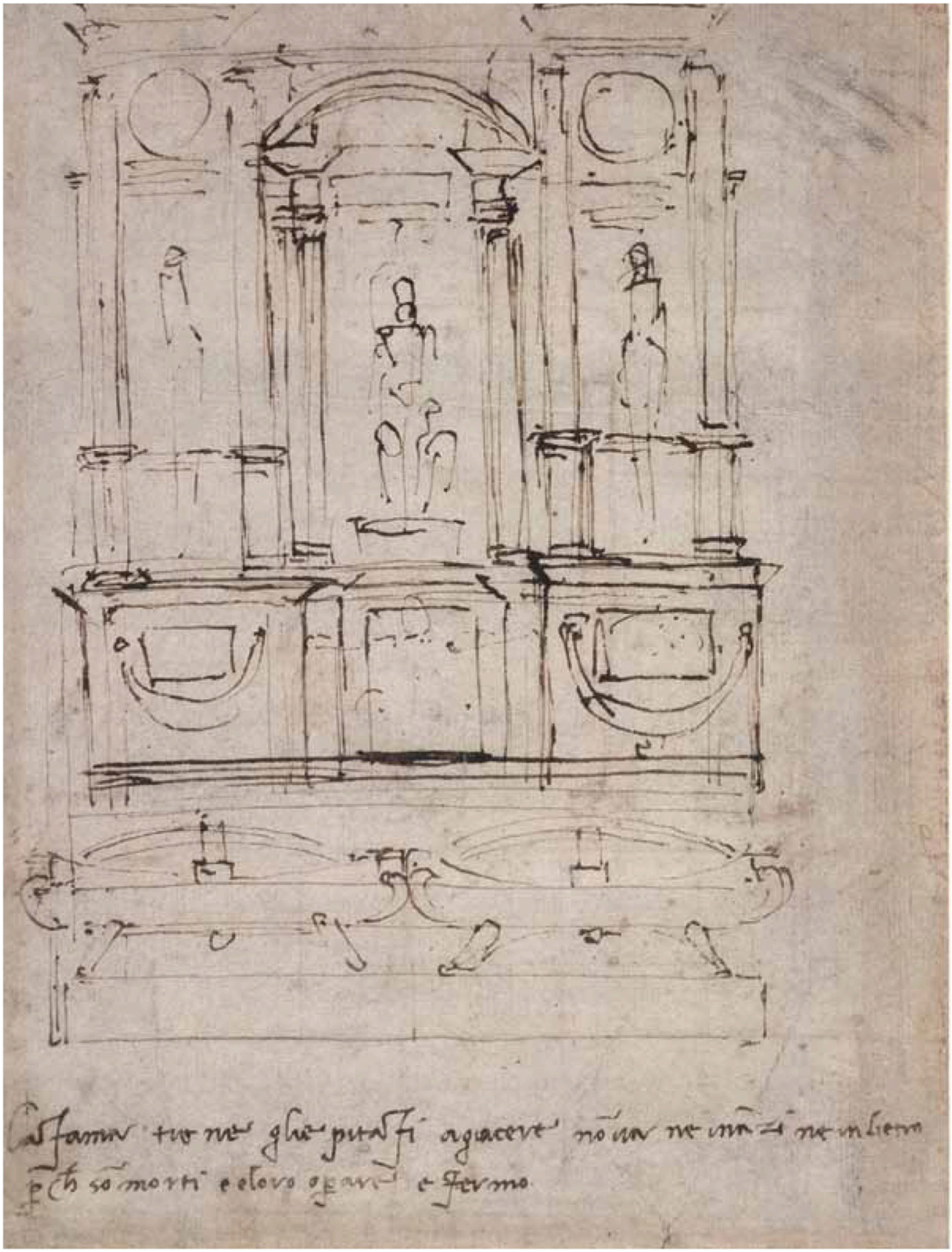


1-21. Detail of Figure 1-20

1-22. Michelangelo, interior of the chapel with the Tomb of Giuliano de' Medici. Medici Chapels, New Sacristy, San Lorenzo, Florence

What happens, on the other hand, when we look at the kind of sheet whose conjunction of picture and word promises a great deal? During the 1520s, Michelangelo devoted enormous energy to filling the New Sacristy in San Lorenzo with a constantly evolving architectural project that was slated to contain tombs for Medici princes (Figure 1-22).[50] The undertaking was bound to be in flux, since the potential honorees were variously living, dead, and becoming pope, and since both the artist and his patrons were engaging in lively ongoing discussions about the shape, size, and placement of the tombs. From this cauldron of activity, we have a considerable number of drawings; two of these, almost uniquely in the entire archive of Michelangelo's works on paper, contain texts in his handwriting that actually seem to record his thoughts—perhaps one could even say *intentions*—as he was conceiving the work.

A British Museum drawing (Figure 1-23), generally taken to be rather early in the chapel's planning stages and probably representing tombs for two Medici princes (Lorenzo il Magnifico and his brother Giuliano) who were not included in the eventual work as we have it, reveals a multistory wall tomb with columns, pilasters, statues, tablets, and decorative swags, in front of which sit two side-by-side sarcophagi.[51] Below the drawing, and in the same ink, Michelangelo has written:



1-23. *(facing)* Michelangelo, drawing for Medici Tombs, *Corpus* 189r. BM 1859-5-14-823. British Museum, London

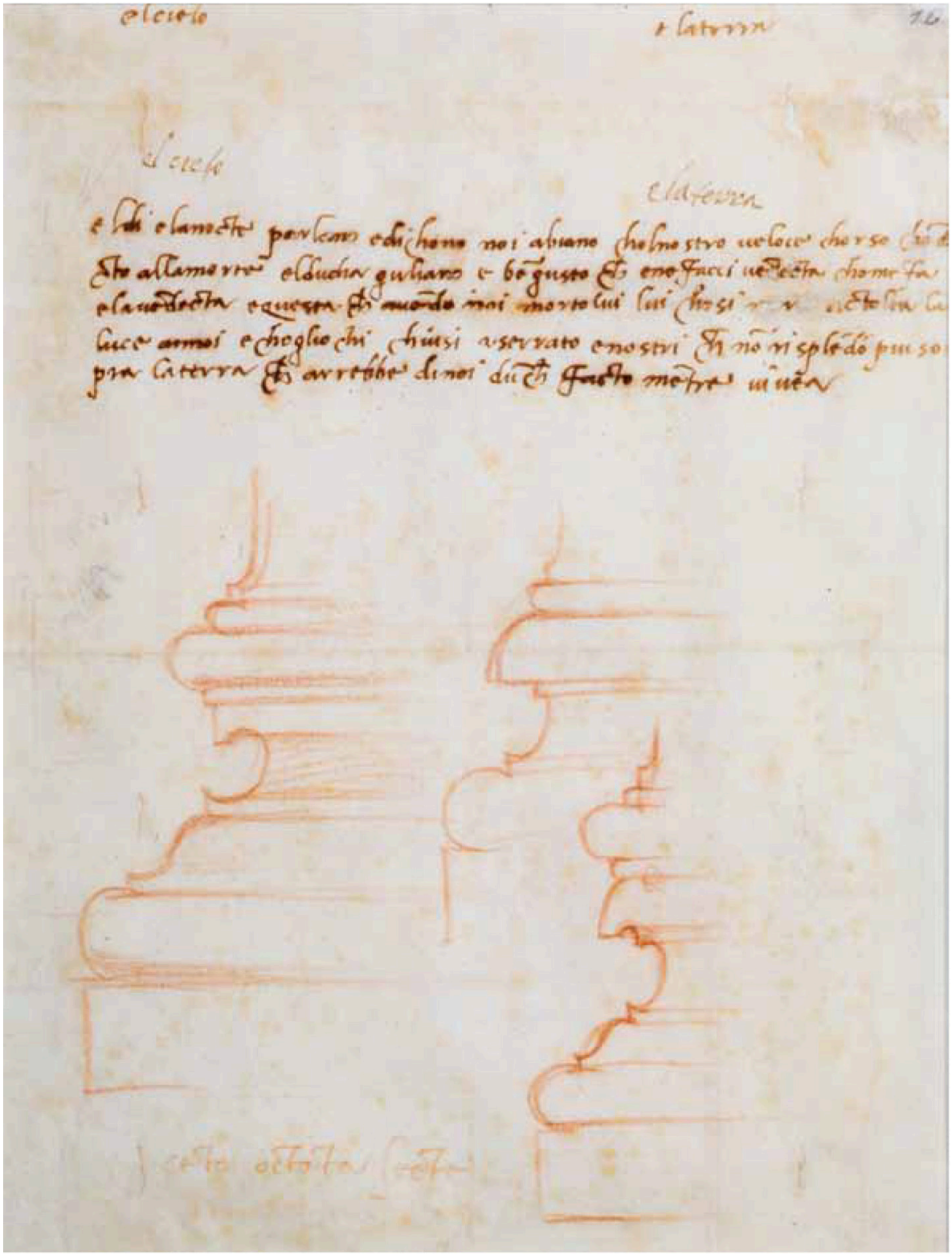
la fama tiene gli epitafi a giacere non va ne inanzi ne indietro perche son morti e eloro operare e fermo[52]

If I do not proceed directly to a translation, it is because the meaning of this utterance—indeed, even the order in which we are to read its clauses—is heavily disputed. One possible English version would read:

> Fame holds the epitaphs in place; she goes neither forward nor backward
> because they are dead, and their work is stilled.

Most of the disagreement centers on the expression *tiene . . . a giacere*, here translated as "holds in place" but which could also mean "holds reclining," "holds in suspension," "holds in death," or (perhaps most probably) "renders useless." It is also possible that *non va inanzi ne indietro* is to be read as the final, rather than the middle clause, in which case it is not Fame that is immobile but rather their work. I offer no definitive reading, but rather two observations. First of all, the obscurity of the statement is as fundamental as any possible clarification; in other words, this text was neither composed for explanatory purposes, nor probably for any eyes other than the artist's own. Secondly, whatever it meant in Michelangelo's head, the words clearly have something to do with the physical form of the monument as he was developing it. However we understand *giacere*, it is a verb commonly used for the reclining position of the dead (as in the ubiquitous Latin tag *hic iacet . . .*), even though it here seems to refer to the epitaphs rather than to the corpses. And, so far as Fame and the epitaphs are concerned, there is indeed a very sketchy figure at the center of the lower story who appears to be holding out its hands toward two tablets that might contain some sort of memorial text, though they certainly do not in this or any other version of the monument. In that very broad, and murky, sense, the words may describe the picture.

We shall return to this drawing, but let us now consider the other annotated sketch that can be associated with this project (Figure 1-24).[53] I use deliberately cautious language because, on visual grounds alone, the work on this sheet has only a conjectural connection to the Medici Tombs. In fact, there is a curious interplay between verbal and visual inscriptions here. The column bases, along with the written out number *one hundred and eighty seven* (whatever that may indicate), are in red chalk, while the long text is in ink; the words *el cielo* and *la terra* ("heaven" and "earth") are each written twice, once in ink and once in red chalk. Out of all this material, only the paragraph of writing has explicit relevance to the funerary monument:



1-24. *(facing)* Michelangelo, drawing for Medici Tombs, *Corpus* 201r. Casa Buonarroti 10A. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

El Dì e la Notte parlano, e dicono: —Noi abbiamo col nostro veloce corso condotto alla morte el duca Giuliano; è ben giusto che e' ne facci vendetta come fa. E la vendetta è questa: che avendo noi morto lui, lui così morto ha tolto la luce a noi e cogli occhi

> chiusi ha serrato e' nostri, che non risplendon più sopra la terra. Che arrebbe di noi dunche fatto, mentre viva?
>
> Day and Night speak and say: "We, in our swift course, have led Duke Giuliano to his death; it is only fair that he should take revenge on us as he does. And his revenge is this: Having been killed by us, he, being dead, has deprived us of light, and by closing his eyes has shut ours, which no longer shine upon the earth. What might he have done with us, then, if he had lived?"[54]

The words signal something like the final phase in the work's development: by this time it is the Dukes who are buried here, and their monument is adorned with statues including Day and Night (Figure 1-25). Though the text seems to offer a more direct account of underlying iconographic meaning than the words that appeared on the British Museum drawing, it is hardly any less enigmatic.

Those who have attempted to penetrate the obscurity of any of these utterances have sought an explanation that would embrace both picture and word at the same time as it mapped a distinctive stage in the artist's developing conception of the work and helped give iconographic meaning to the final form. This is a wholly worthwhile undertaking, to be sure, but it fails to consider the radically disjunctive nature of all the work on these (and so many other) sheets. Let us take the relatively simple case of *heaven* and *earth*. It is quite reasonable to associate this pair of terms with the conspicuously up-and-down structure common to nearly all stages of the monument's development. It is also clear that there is some connection between that duality and the quartet of *Day*, *Night*, *Dusk*, and *Dawn*, which are sculpted in the Chapel as we have it today; indeed, the relations are made rather explicit in the Giannotti dialogues we cited earlier concerning the time Dante spent in Hell.[55] But if we look at these words as they actually appear on the page—according them, as it were, the same visual privileges that images receive—it becomes more difficult to nail down their signification. As it turns out, the relationship of *cielo* to *terra* is conspicuously horizontal rather than vertical. The vertical relationship is, by contrast, between *cielo* and *cielo* and between *terra* and *terra*; and both of these units exist in an alternation of mediums, first ink and then red chalk, followed by the longer text and then the drawing, also first in ink and then in red chalk.

1-25. Michelangelo, *Day* and *Night*, Medici Tombs. Tomb of Giuliano de Medici. Medici Chapels, New Sacristy, San Lorenzo, Florence

We cannot determine from these stray words what is in Michelangelo's mind. And the more extensive piece of writing, though less fragmentary in both form and substance, can scarcely be considered any more definitive as a basis for reading the eventual visual object. Clearly, the artist is thinking in a traditional mode of celebrating great men and mourning their passing via the conceit of an exchange between the living and the dead. We might compare the precisely contemporaneous Raphael epitaph, attributed to Cardinal Bembo, according to which Nature

has herself perished in respectful—and, indeed, resentfully competitive—reaction to the artist's death:

> Ille hic est Raphael timuit quo sospite vinci
> rerum magna parens et moriente mori.
>
> This is that Raphael, by whom in life
> Our mighty mother Nature feared defeat;
> And in whose death did fear herself to die.[56]

In the case of the Medici, what is being mourned is the passing not of creativity but of sovereignty; as a consequence, the forces threatened by this instance of human mortality are those cosmic units which (again, in Dantean mode) govern the structures of earthly time. And, given that, like Raphael's, this death was understood as notably premature, this same conceit allows for a final compliment suggesting that the decedent would have gained supremacy even over immortal powers had he survived.

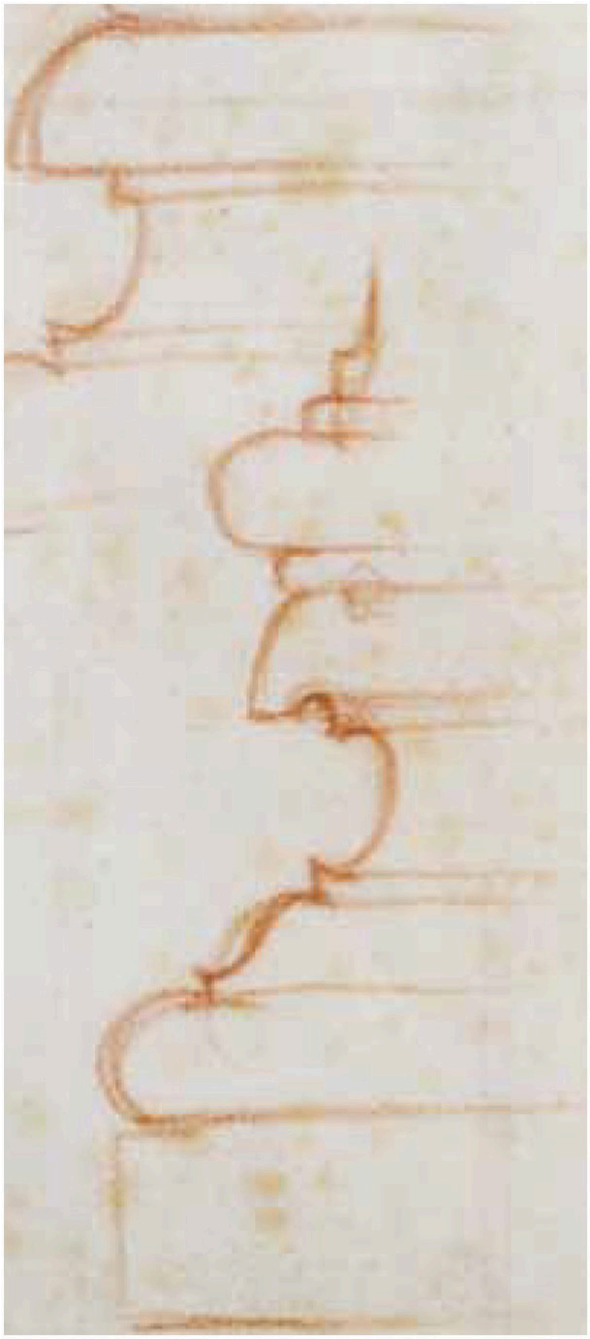
For me, it is not so much that all these various words *explain* the form or meaning of the Medici Tombs; at issue, rather, is Michelangelo's search for a medium of expression. I am struck, first of all, by the fact that this account of Day and Night does not appear on a sheet where the artist is sketching figurative sculpture at all. Whatever the order of writing and drawing on this page may have been—and this is a topic that will stimulate and perplex throughout the present volume—it is equally clear both that the various inscriptions are spatially interlocked *and* that they do not stand in a logical relationship to each other. Architecture, in other words, is not the place where Michelangelo can readily send out messages about death, immortality, and the governing forces of the universe.

Which brings up the question of where the artist *can* send out such messages. There is a larger conceit in these lines, apart from the exchange of the living and the dead, a conceit far closer to Michelangelo's heart. The notion of speaking statues has far too long a history to be recounted here,[57] but it should be noted that within this very same Medici Chapel there was eventually to be a famous exchange, in which Giovanni di Carlo Strozzi, punning on the artist's name, praised the *Night* as having been "sculpted by an Angel"; he celebrated her as being so close to real life that, if the viewer should awaken her, she would speak.[58] That poem was written in the third person, but in response Michelangelo himself took a cue from this possibility and composed in her voice an attack—paradoxically, given the purposes of the Chapel—on Medici rule:

> Caro m'è il sonno, e più l'esser di sasso,
> mentre che 'l danno e la vergogna dura;
> non veder, non sentir, m'è gran ventura;
> però non mi destar, deh, parla basso.
>
> Dear to me is sleep, dearer still being made of stone, while harm and shame last; not to see, not to hear, to me is a great boon; so do not waken me, ah, speak but softly.

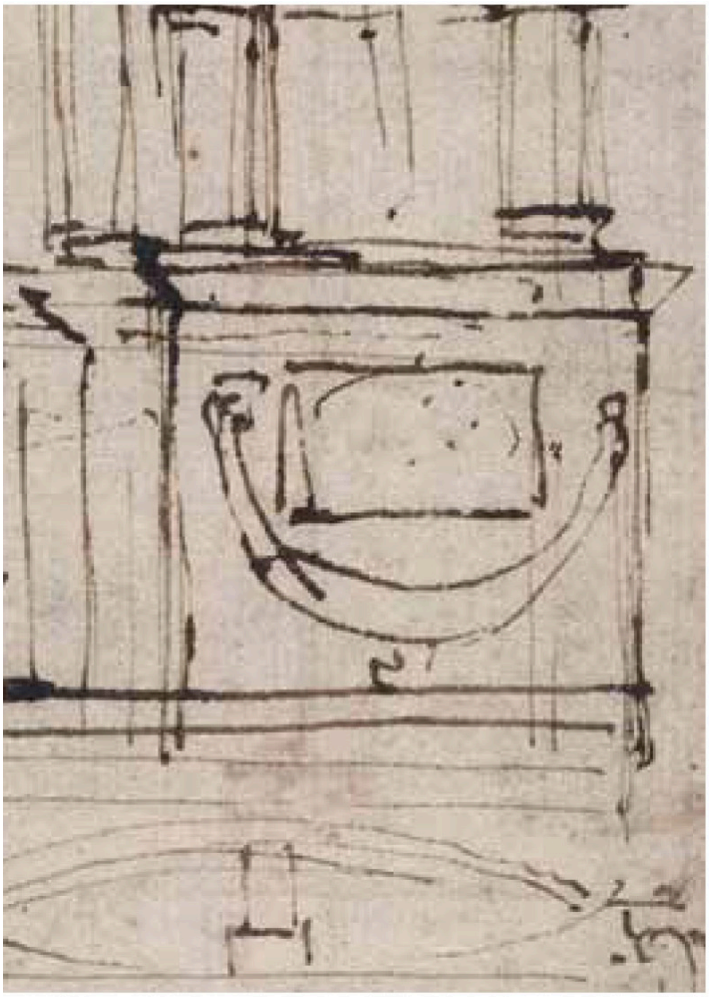
According to this version of the conceit, the statue *could* speak but, in effect, uses speech to refuse speech. And that, I think, is the heart of the matter. What is, in the end, most striking about Michelangelo's piece of writing is the utter impossibility that any statue, however powerfully sculpted, could possibly communicate something as semantically complex as the text he has committed to paper on their behalf. Indeed, even in language, it proves quite

difficult to get the drift of it. So, rather than focusing on the ways in which this document is the underlying intention behind the finished art object, we should consider the moment in which this page was produced as one in which Michelangelo was painfully aware of the alienation of one element of his art from the other, of the gap between inarticulate architecture and the sculpted human figure, seemingly endowed with the power of speech and yet doomed in real life to stony silence. Which, I think, explains the final caprice on the page (Figure 1-26), the little doodle in which the artist metamorphoses one of the column bases into a grotesque open-mouthed profile. Having composed these textual messages on a drawing that lacks organs of speech, Michelangelo goes on to complete the joke by providing the antic face of a figure who could actually utter them.



1-26. Detail of Figure 1-24

This may also help us to explain why Michelangelo is worrying about the epitaphs on the other Medici Tomb-related sheet. Here, in a sense, the relations are more orderly than in the later drawing: the text appears like a caption under a sketch to which it is evidently connected; and the issues are simpler, since the artist does not yet seem to have imagined an iconographic system beyond the Virgin Mary, patron saints, and the unrepresented bodies of the dead. But once again the question of language troubles him—in particular, its role in the enterprise of commemoration. The final version of the work, it should be recalled, contains no celebratory text (not even the names of the deceased), nor does it make any attempt at accurately representing the two physiognomies. In fact, it is reported that the artist was criticized for failing to provide lifelike portraits, to which he replied, "In a thousand years, no one will know what they looked like," suggesting a far greater immortality for his work than for the persons he was hired to celebrate.[59] At this earlier stage of the project, however, he is not imagining any representation of the two subjects at all—merely elaborate catafalques—but he has left rectangular spaces above each of them for some sort of dedicatory writing (Figure 1-27).



1-27. Detail of Figure 1-23

Yet these spaces remain empty, and instead his verbal composition on the sheet is devoted to a convoluted meditation on the possible operations of text within the monument. Perhaps it is no coincidence that he has used the same verb for the epitaphs as that which tombs

generally use for dead bodies. If the epitaphs are themselves reclining, or buried, or rendered useless, that speaks to the artist's complex relation to text. In both of these drawings, in fact, language insists on its presence in the creative process, but it also refuses to find a comfortable place in the design. The empty memorial tablet of the first sketch and the bizarre open-mouthed gargoyle of the second may stand as emblems for the restless relation of word and image that we will observe throughout Michelangelo's career and, indeed, at the very heart of it.

2
ON THE SAME PAGE

Paper, at least in the centuries before the advent of electronic information media, counts as the ultimate multitasking artistic medium, while also being the vehicle for many non-artistic undertakings. It is ground zero for all efforts of writers, ranging from their first hasty notes to their grandest final volumes in folio, while for painters and sculptors it often accounts for the beginnings of the process and at least for some subset of the finished work. It is an obvious fact, but at the same time extremely significant, that when visual artists put pen to paper they are behaving exactly as writers do, even if they use no alphabetic signs; and indeed for those artists possessed of literacy, the forming of text alongside the art-making process must often seem quite natural, almost as though no boundary were being crossed.

The life of paper in the early modern period, as it happens, raises some questions about this boundary.[1] Until late in the Middle Ages, the act of laying down words or pictures on a flexible substance that could be easily circulated depended on products like parchment or vellum, which were made from animal skins; and, even though thrifty consumers might attempt to recycle these materials by scratching away previous sets of marks inscribed on them, the process remained too costly to allow its wide diffusion or casual use. In China, where the invention of paper made from vegetable fiber preceded any European manufacture of a comparable substance by a thousand years, an intricately reciprocal relationship developed between the activities of calligraphy and drawing, on the one hand, and the media of paper and ink on the other; and a similar kind of interrelation arose once woodblock printing was developed. Much the same concatenation, *mutatis mutandis*, can be observed centuries later in Western Europe.

Paper is first manufactured in Europe in the twelfth century, but for two hundred years (at least) it is both expensive and unreliable. It does not have sufficient prestige to be used for legal documents or significant textual manuscripts, while at the same time it is too costly to form part of studio practice in the visual arts. By the fourteenth century, paper did start to make headway in the notarial world, since it was many times cheaper than parchment. But it was not until the advent of moveable type that the process advanced rapidly. Once the printing presses of Mainz, Lyons, and Venice needed to be fed, papermaking became a major Western European industry, with the result that, precisely in time for the Renaissance, its availability multiplied and its price diminished. And so we have another instance of the crossover between the word and the image: the development of book production helps produce a corresponding revolution in artistic practice, whereby it becomes vastly more common for painters and sculptors to have paper at their disposal for the purposes of training their apprentices and experimenting with their pictorial conceptions well before the final product is undertaken.

To be sure, in the late fifteenth century, when Michelangelo was being trained and beginning to operate as an artist in his own right, paper was still a commodity whose price assured that it would be selectively obtained, carefully guarded, and parsimoniously utilized.

But, considering that we possess something like fifteen hundred sheets bearing reliable evidence of Michelangelo's hand, we can hardly say that paper was priced out of range for (at least) an artist of his stature at his historical moment.[2] What especially interests us, though, is not the number of sheets but the number of different activities that covered those sheets. If everything from communications with the pope to memos about groceries, from drawings with all the care and polish of a panel painting to doodles depicting a defecating man, can be produced atop what is basically the same raw material,[3] if many of these things were submitted to numerous trial drafts, and if, within the lifetime of this artist, works on paper make the transit from the status of throwaways to that of major collectibles,[4] it ought to be clear that this product, whatever its actual scarcity or cost, operated as a sort of fungible passe-partout in Michelangelo's culture. But this account of the broad range of paper's utility suggests a hierarchy that would maintain the separateness of different kinds of inscriptions even if the material under them was identical. The true sign—and it is a highly enigmatic one—of how paper functioned for Michelangelo as a medium is the fact that such a variety of operations could take place on a single sheet.

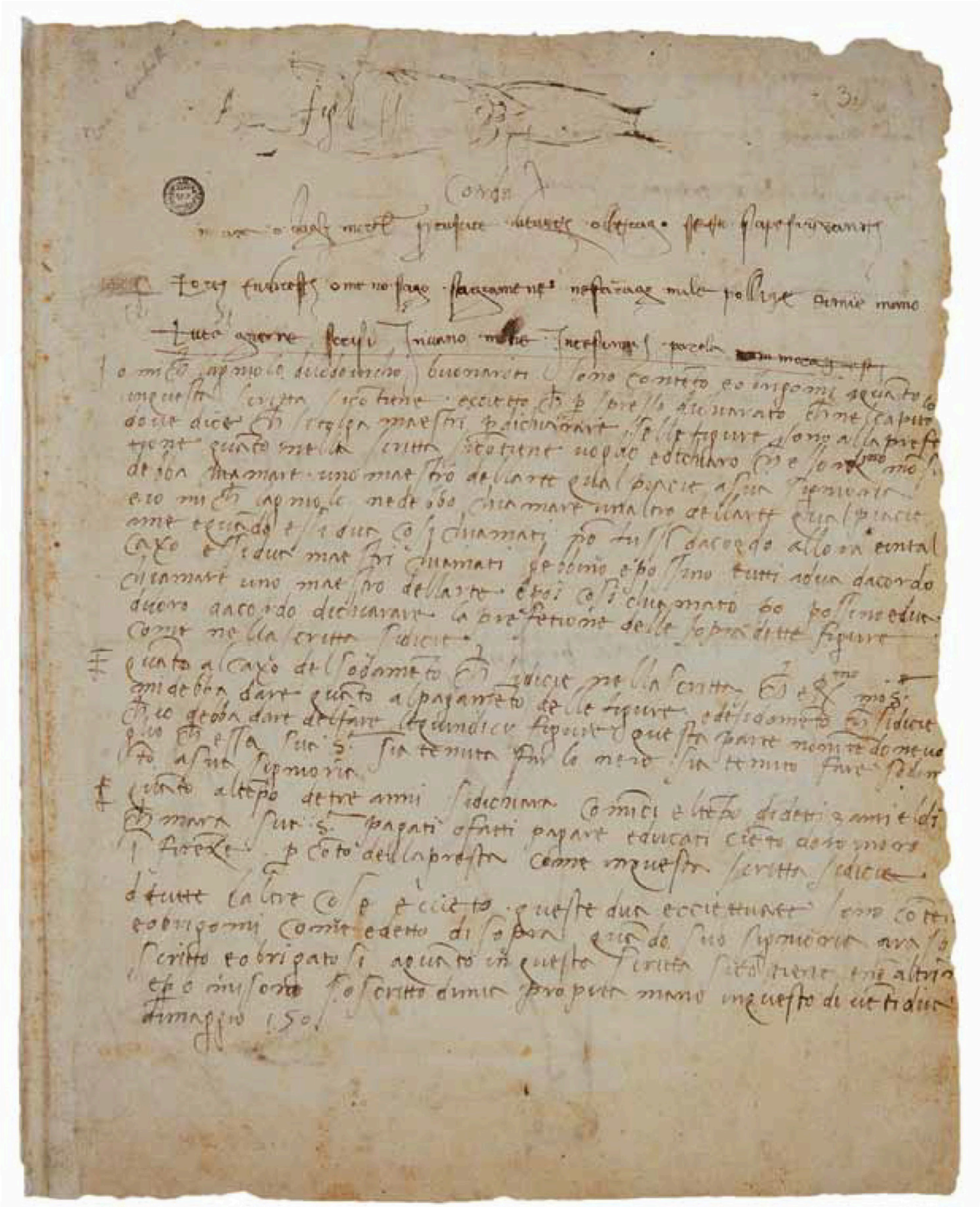
Let us begin with as pure a phenomenological description as possible of one of the earliest sheets in the Michelangelo archive, a double-sided page in the Archivio Buonarroti (Figures 2-1, 2-2)[5]. At the top of the recto—though it should be recollected that "recto" and "verso" are after-the-fact designations, not to be automatically accorded primary and secondary status—is the horizontal sketch of a leg universally credited to Michelangelo and apparently belonging to a woman or a boy. At the left of the open top of the leg, the artist has written *Am* and *fig*, the latter actually appearing inside the outline of the upper part of the limb. Directly underneath, in what seems the same ink, he has written *Corda*. Next, reading down, there are three lines in a completely different handwriting, variously assigned to the artist's brother or father, whose precise purpose and import are unclear, though it is apparent that they refer to some catastrophic, probably legal, situation, given expressions like *morire*, *dagli morte*, *oltraggio*, and *scrisi invano none intesi mai parola* ("to die," "give him death," "outrage," "I wrote uselessly, not having ever heard a word"). Just below that, after drawing a horizontal line, Michelangelo himself has composed a lengthy response, in official language, to a contract relative to statues for the Piccolomini altar in Siena, agreeing with some clauses and contesting others; these many lines end with a prescribed signature formula and the date 22 May 1501.

At the top of the verso, and in the same handwriting as the histrionic expressions that occupy a corresponding position on the recto, there are three lines of legalese, which appear to be part of some declaration relative to the Buonarroti family, to the *lanaiuoli*, and to one Lodovico Tedaldi. This is signed twice, on the right as "Buonarotto" and below, flush with the left margin, as "Buonaroto di Lodovicho." After a short space, there are another three lines, perhaps in a different handwriting, in which the writer identifies himself as Buonarroto (i.e., the artist's brother) and makes some request—"mandatemi a dire quello . . . " ("send t0 me to say that . . .")—but the text breaks off into illegibility. Barely below this, and in symmetry to the final line of the preceding text, Michelangelo has written "la voglia invoglia e llasa poi la doglia" ("desire engenders desire and then must suffer"); then, after a space with no text, he has written "la morte è 'l fin d'una prigione scura" ("death is the end of a dark prison"). The former of these utterances is his own poetic text, while the latter is quoted from Petrarch's *Triumph of Death*.[6] At the left margin near the Petrarch quotation, but with the paper turned ninety degrees clockwise, Michelangelo has written one word, or part of a word, that is undecipherable. Finally—though not necessarily in the chronological sense—he has produced

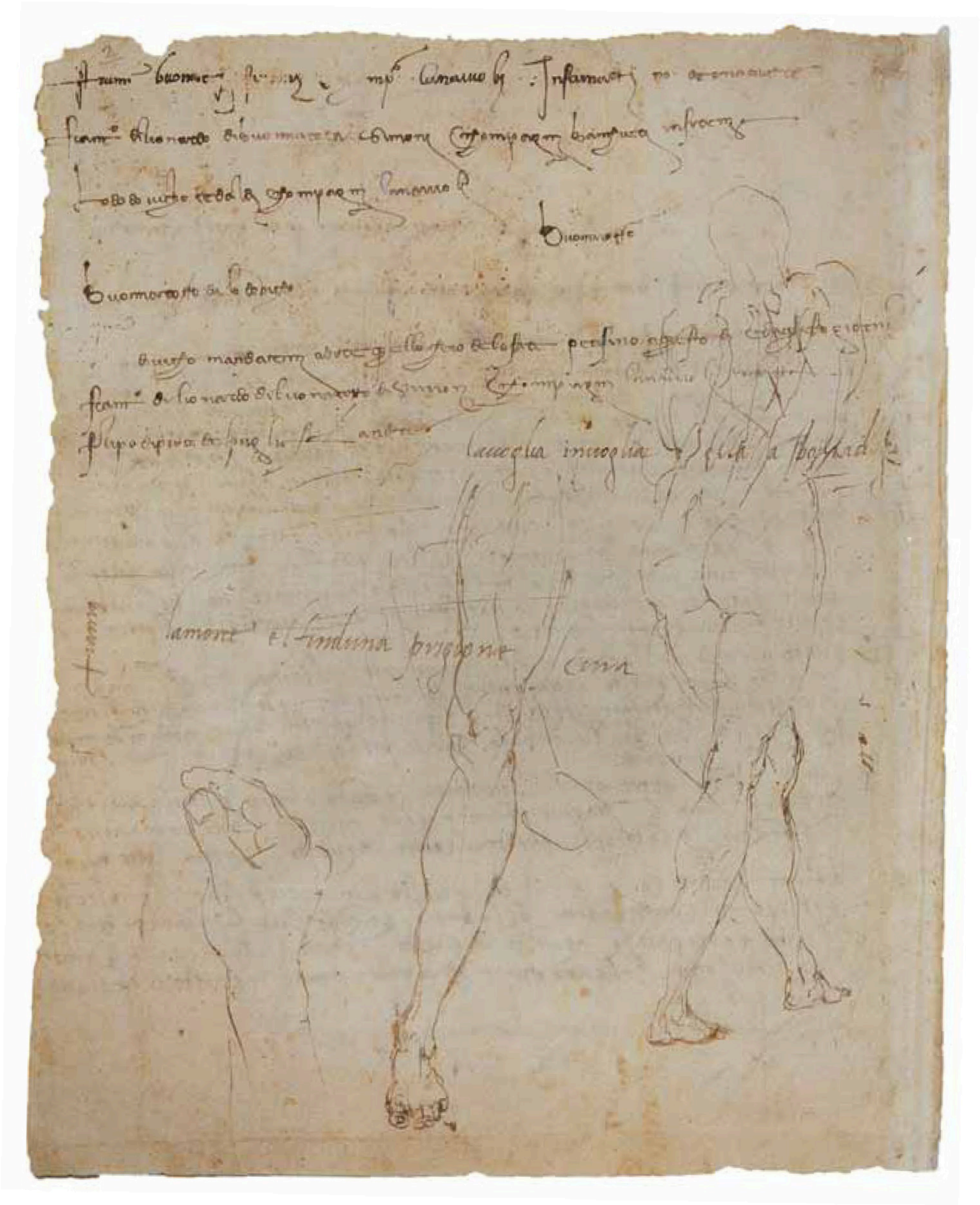
three line drawings that occupy about two-thirds of the sheet, including the space in which his brother has written the letter fragment and the space in which he has himself inscribed the bits of poetry, though there is at least partly a sense that "la voglia invoglia" avoids contact with the drawing (or vice versa). These sketches consist of a hand, then, in much smaller scale, a leg and the suggestion of a second leg, and, finally, a whole nude figure seen from behind, whose legs are parallel to the adjacent pair of legs and somewhat out of proportion with the upper body that is attached to them, which itself occupies some of the same space as the written material.

What are we to make of all this? We may leave aside the reconstruction of the Siena altar negotiations and the attempts to understand the legal fortunes of the Buonarroti clan in the first decade of the sixteenth century; we may bracket the meaning of *Am*, *fig*, and *Corda* as well as the place that Petrarch's *Trionfi* or "La voglia invoglia . . . " might have in the narrative of Michelangelo's verse-writing career; we may leave to others the fascinating questions raised by what may be the earliest sketches from life that we have in the artist's hand.[7] Instead, let us ask what all these things are doing on the same piece of paper.

What we have here, essentially, is a strange mix of fragmentation and union. With the exception of Michelangelo's memo on the Piccolomini Altar, everything on the sheet is, in one way or another, a fragment. (Not, it should be noted, because anything has been cut off. The edges of the sheet are rough, it is faded and stained; but none of its mysteries will be solved by postulating missing pieces.) The fleeting scraps of poetic text, the highly unfinished sketches that aim toward no very specific final art object, even the seemingly formal bits of composition by members of the Buonarroti family: all of these testify to the status of the page as a threshold site where forms of expression can be undertaken in some kind of rough draft. Which means that on this sheet individuals can practice communication without having to concern themselves with the consequences of such communication reaching its intended goal. Or, to put it another way, the page is a place where people can talk to themselves without being overheard.



2-1. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 15r. Archivio Buonarroti II-III 3. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

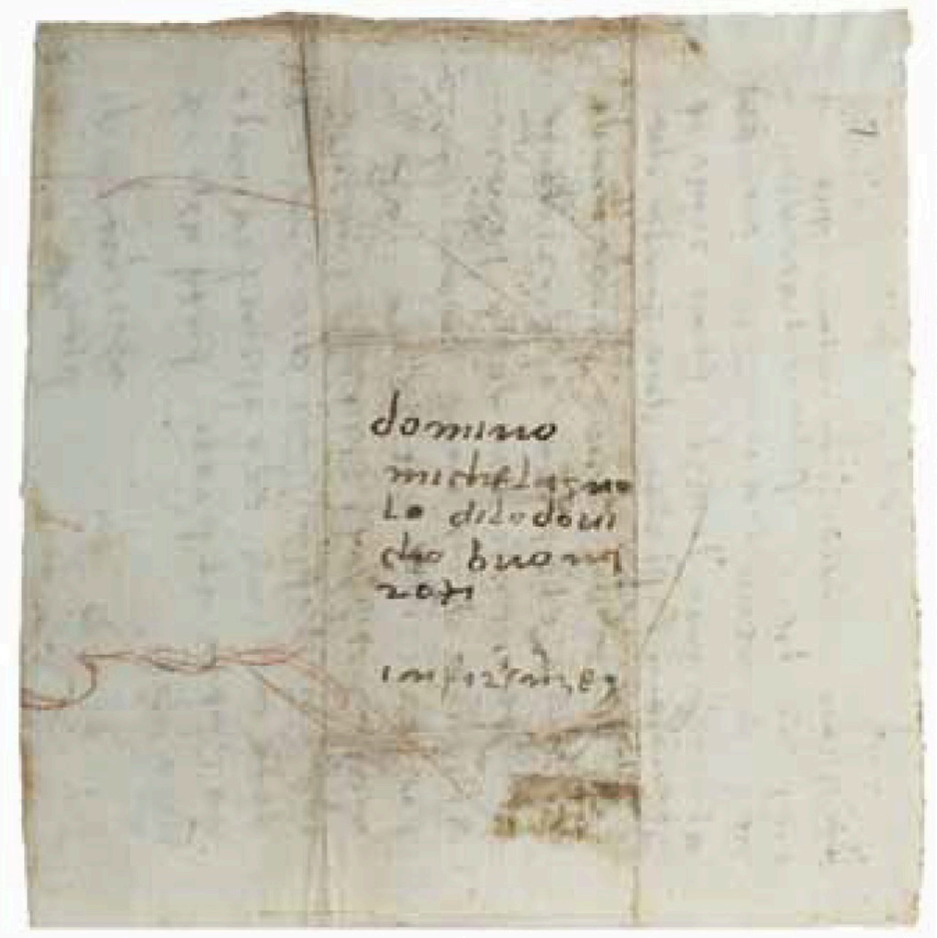


2-2. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 15v. Archivio Buonarroti II-III 3. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

Except, of course, that it gets passed around among different individuals, who necessarily witness each others' communiqués. And that is where the union comes in. If nearly everything produced here is truncated, the sheet as a whole nevertheless functions as the common space for a remarkable range of disparate, intersecting, and sequential undertakings. The attempt to reconstruct the chronology of a sheet of paper is always a risky business. In the present case, suffice it to say that we know the date and the author of the largest piece of text on the recto. Given the fact that this text appears a third of the way down the sheet, with a line drawn to

separate it from what is written above (itself undertaken without separation from the sketch at the top), we can at least assume that the paper passed from Michelangelo to someone else and then back to Michelangelo for three radically different purposes (or four, if one counts the drawing of the leg and the composition of *Am, fig,* and *Corda* as separate purposes). The materials on the verso similarly suggest that the page was passed among two or three individuals, who, once again, produced three or four different sorts of expression.

Granted, none of these people was purposefully participating in a communal undertaking; still, the paper in effect forced them into an unintentional act of collaboration. Whoever wrote about death and outrage was looking at the sketch of a leg; and even when Michelangelo tried to separate himself from that text by drawing a line, he could not erase it from his field of vision while he responded to the Siena contract. Nor did this collection of bits and pieces discourage the artist—only twenty-six years old and just beginning to be widely known—from composing an extraordinarily elegant, decidedly non-fragmentary communication in a remarkably assured and mature voice, even though the very fact that it is written on this heavily trafficked sheet reminds us that it could never have been intended as the actual document of communication with the Sienese authorities. Whoever wrote the legal-style texts on the verso did so in the presence of Michelangelo's sketches of nudes; or else, if the chronology was reversed, the sketches were produced in the presence of the writing. And the placement of the poetic fragments, as well as their curiously elongated calligraphy, which seems to mimic the form of the drawings, suggests that the draftsman was himself engaged in a lopsided dialogue with the writer, though they were in fact one and the same person.



2-3. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 484v. Archivio Buonarroti IX, fol. 533. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

2-4. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 273v. Archivio Buonarroti IX, fol. 538/9. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

The time span covered by the undertakings on the page is equally noteworthy. We know that one large bloc of this heterogeneous material was produced in 1501, but, even though some have argued for the relevance of a family crisis that dates to 1508,[8] we cannot guess exactly how much time elapsed between the earliest and latest contributions to the sheet. Possibly in this case the duration was brief, unlike other instances (as we shall see), where different inscriptions were made many decades apart.[9] But we dare not forget that every piece of paper we still possess must have remained within the studio in order for it to come down to us, which means that this sheet stayed with Michelangelo for some sixty years before his death, or at least for the several decades of his career that he spent in Florence.[10] Even if no new marks were made on the paper after the first decade of the sixteenth century, it remained a living object, available to be observed, by the artist and others, in all its ragtag diversity.

This sheet may be exceptional in the extent of its itinerary, but it is by no means unique. The underlying lesson as we observe the variety of materials committed to a single piece of paper is that these sheets are not stationary monuments but objects in active social commerce; and within that social commerce, there is a particular sort of energy that seems to arise out of the alternation between verbal and pictorial inscriptions. When, for instance, Michelangelo receives a letter, on more than one occasion he cannot resist sketching on the verso side, which contains the address and thus leaves quite a bit of empty space. Two

surviving communications from Michele di Piero, stone mason and quarry manager in Carrara while the artist was laboring on the San Lorenzo project, became the basis for doodles of this kind.[11] In one instance (Figure 2-3), some sort of large ellipse, or what remains of it, encircles the address; whether it is part of a ground plan or a figure sketch is impossible to determine. In the other case (Figure 2-4), the address is crowded around with a variety of drawings, both sculptural and architectural, as well as with some larger circles that resemble the line drawing on the other sheet. The carefully drawn portico and steps, whose destination has been variously linked to the Julius Tomb or any of the San Lorenzo projects, is unmistakably autograph, while the figure sketches may well betray the hand of a pupil.

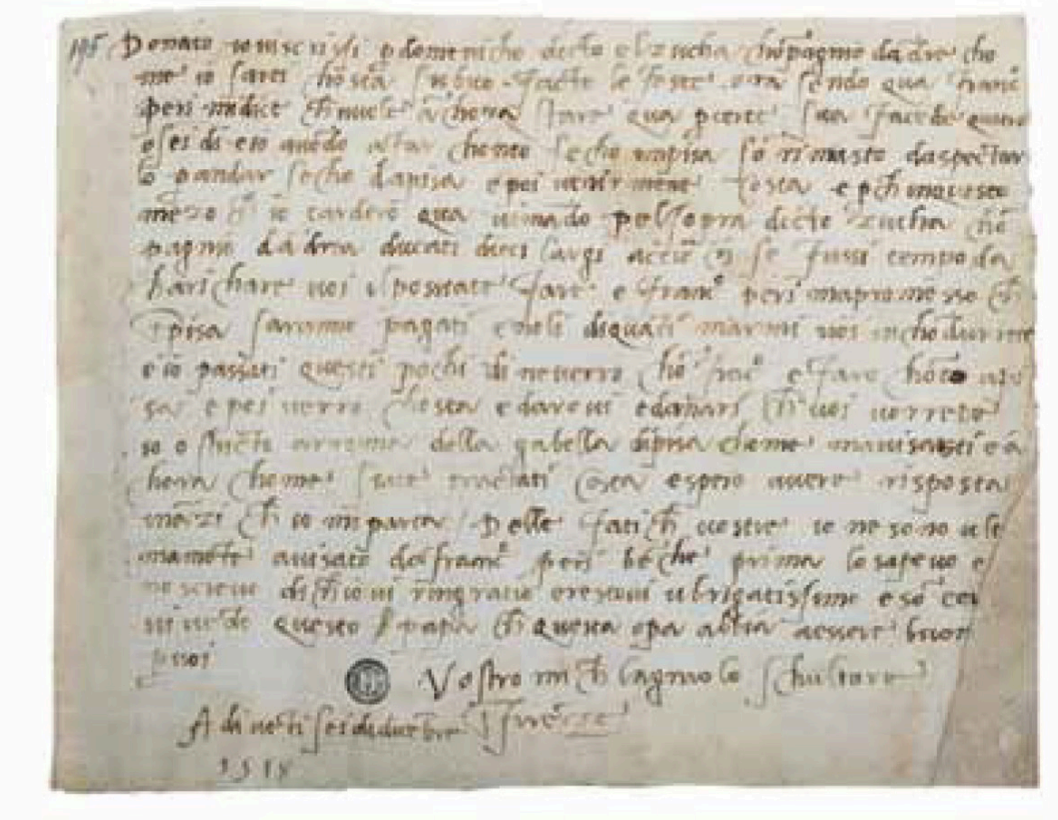
That sort of judgment—adopting, in this instance, Barocchi's attribution to Michelangelo's much-cited assistant Antonio Mini—in many scholarly accounts terminates the discussion of a drawing.[12] But if we are concerned with the multiple and peripatetic lives of a single sheet, the declassifying of a sketch from autograph status raises the stakes rather than lowering them. In fact, the archive consists of many sheets whose multiplicity signals the way in which images and words circulated within the industrial network that centered on Michelangelo. The verso of a Casa Buonarroti page (Figures 2-5, 2-6), [13] for instance, records a payment to one "Topolino" (not, as in modern Italian, Mickey Mouse, but the stonecarver Domenico di Giovanni di Bertino) and the date of June 18th, without a year; below it, also in ink, there is a geometric shape, possibly for a piece of architecture. On the recto, there is a superb if hasty sketch of a muscular figure with his head turned and his hands probably bound behind him, in the style of the Julius II *Captives*. Much of this has been generally credited to the Master. But closely crowding the sketch of the bound figure are some drawings generally identified as cuirasses to be associated with the portraits in the Medici Tombs, universally ascribed to a follower. If all those judgments are correct, then Master and pupil were working in intimate propinquity on the sheet; and that activity itself lives back-to-back (including the possibility of bleeding through) with some of the written bookkeeping work that occupies the same circuit of people.

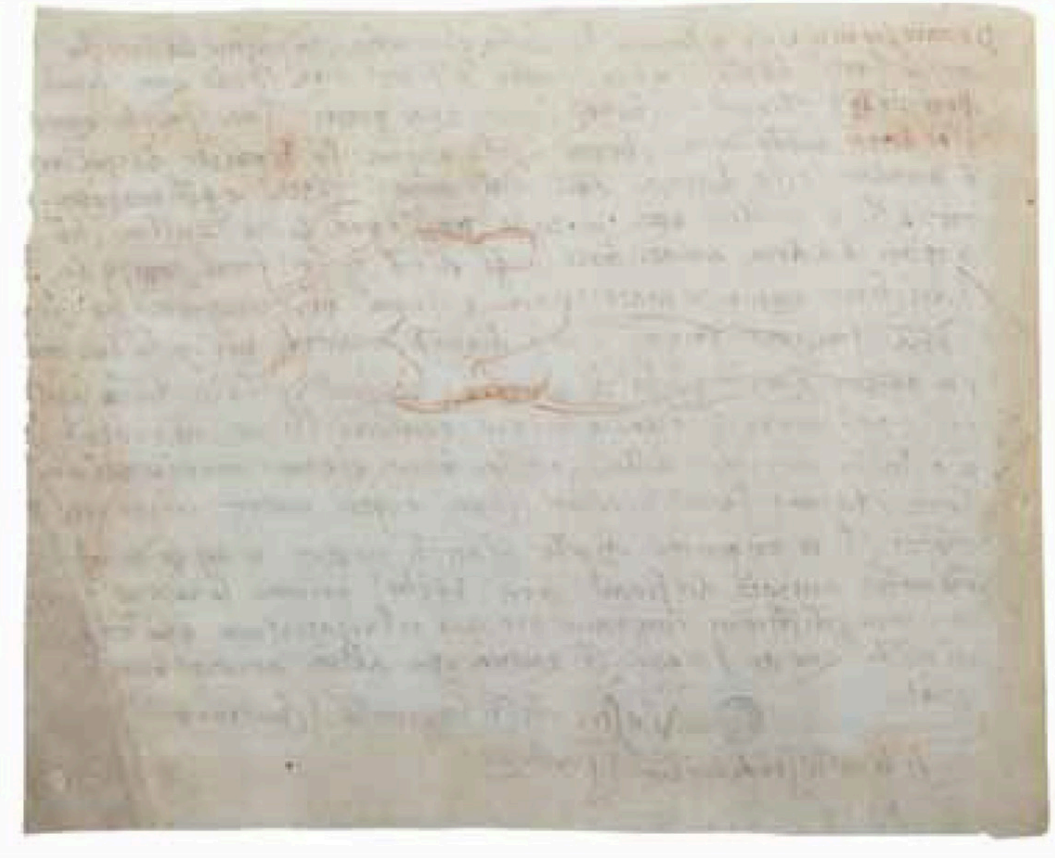
2-5 and 2-6. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 59r,v. Casa Buonarroti 42F. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

2-7. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 64r. Archivio Buonarroti I, 25, fol. 62. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

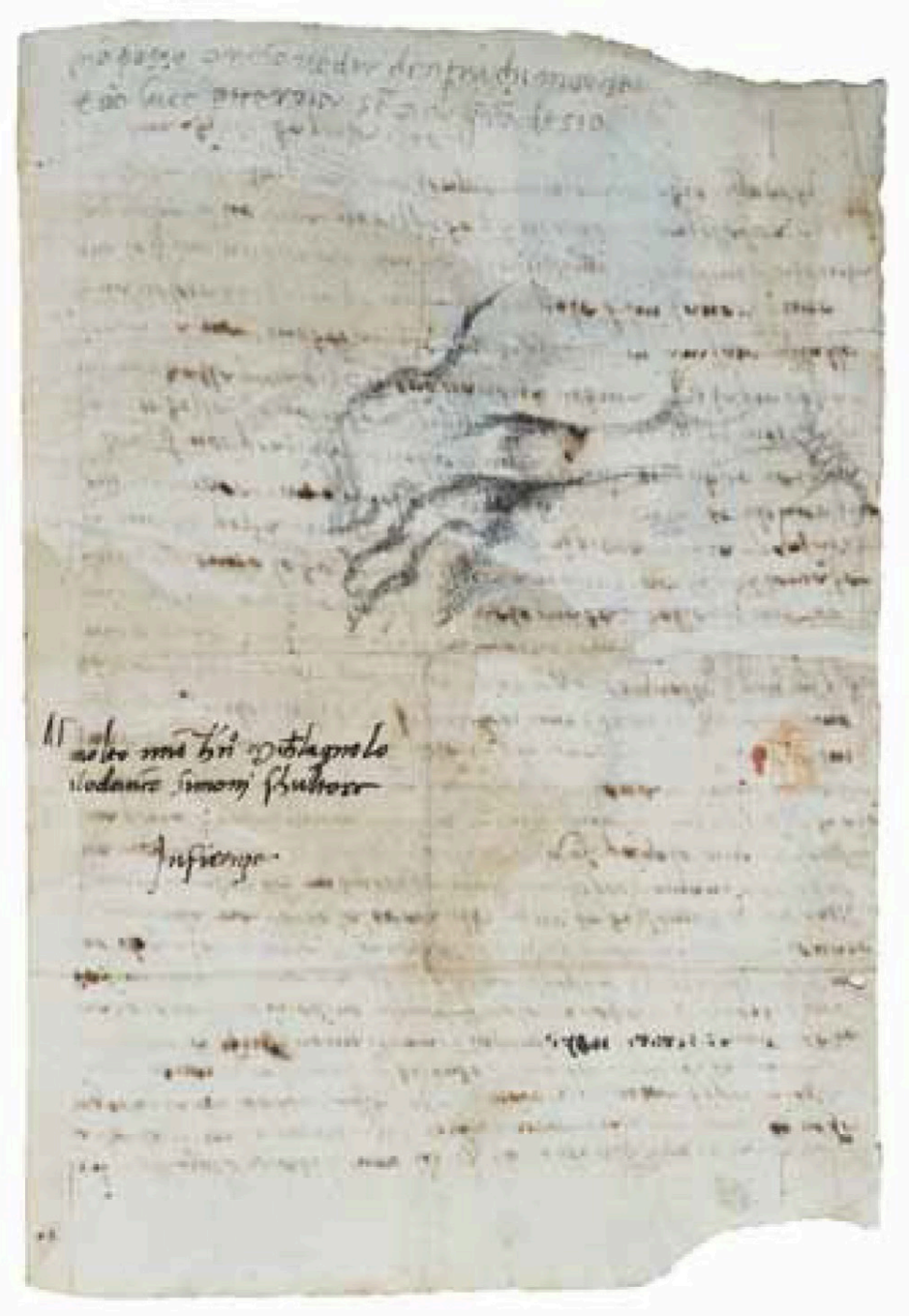
Larger-scale communications are no less subject to being passed around among different hands. Another Archivio Buonarroti page (Figure 2-7) reveals two efforts by Michelangelo to begin writing a letter.[14] At one edge, he gets only as far as *Carissimo*, while at the opposite

edge of the page, and with the sheet turned upside down, he composes a fuller greeting, beginning *Caro quanto maggio fratello, salute* and continuing for three lines, but eventually most of this gets crossed out. Meanwhile, occupying the large middle section of the sheet, and in the same orientation as the *Carissimo*, are two perfectly parallel nude figures consisting of torsos and widespread legs, one of them more fully developed and with an absurdly out-of-proportion upper body and head loosely attached above. Both of these, or neither, might be credited to the Master; or—perhaps more likely—one may be his work and the other a pupil's attempt to copy it, perhaps including the ungainly supplement. In another instance[15] (Figures 2-8, 2-9), a quite complete letter, including signature and date (26 December 1518 to Donato Benti di Serravezza about the complicated schedule of marble procurement in Carrara and the moneys being dispersed) must nevertheless be presumed to have been a draft, since it remained in Michelangelo's studio, where it apparently fell into the hands of a pupil, such that on the verso there appeared a red chalk drawing of a nude that no one credits to the Master.





2-8 and 2-9. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 63r,v. Archivio Buonarroti V20. Casa Buonarroti, Florence



2-10 and 2-11. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 440r,v. Archivio Buonarroti VIII, fol. 283. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

When sketching takes place on a letter written *to* Michelangelo, the circumstances might seem somewhat different, since the document was necessarily a final draft and potentially of some archival value within the artist's business papers. Such is the case with a letter from Rome sent to Florence by Giovan Francesco Fattucci and dated 18 April 1526 (Figures 2-10, 2-11).[16] It was a significant piece of correspondence, concerning the reception by Clement VII of plans for the Laurentian Library as well as prospects for engaging Giovanni da Udine on the project. Still, the importance of the sheet did not prevent its continued use. The verso, containing at first only the address that Fattucci had written on it (in rather grandiose form), gets turned upside-down to become the site for the fragmentary drawing of a male

midsection, which no one attributes to the Master, despite its being a carefully worked and intricately shaded attempt at the manner of Michelangelo's chalk work. And either before or after that drawing was done by one of his associates, Michelangelo himself used hard black chalk to write two stray lines of verse—"né posso or non veder dentr'a chi muore | tuo luce ecterna senza gran desio" ("nor can I now but see in that which dies your eternal light with great desire")—which constitute one of several attempts at revision of a sonnet that we know as "La vita del mie amor non è 'l cor mio."[17] The lyric impulse, for all its appearance of passionate privacy, is no more quarantined than any other work of the studio.

Indeed, on the most multiply revisited sheets of paper we can see traces of almost everything in the orbit of Michelangelo's production, as is apparent on a double-sided page at the Louvre (Figures 2-12, 2-13). At some moment in mid-career (it has been dated as early as the 1520s and as late as 1550), the artist produced a red chalk drawing of two figures locked in struggle. Their identities have been the subject of conjectures ranging from Hercules and Antaeus to Jacob and the Angel, though I share deTolnay's sense that there is a more ambiguous quality to this embrace, which leads me to suspect that there may be less a particular story here than a general hommage to the classical symplegma, in which it is not always easy to tell whether the two individuals are fighting or having sex.[18] What concerns us more than their names, however, is the status of this drawing as an object. An exceptionally striking piece of work, notable for its luscious use of the medium and for the tendency to turn the human body into a set of abstract forms, this drawing stands in a curious (though not, in the end, so very rare) middle ground between being finished and being a work in process. The exquisite shading on the bodies and the halo of hatching around them suggest something ready to be passed around among admirers; on the other hand, there are numerous *pentimenti*, as well as what appears to be a completely separate outline drawing (possibly associated with the bronze *David*) in the open space at the upper right-hand corner of the sheet.

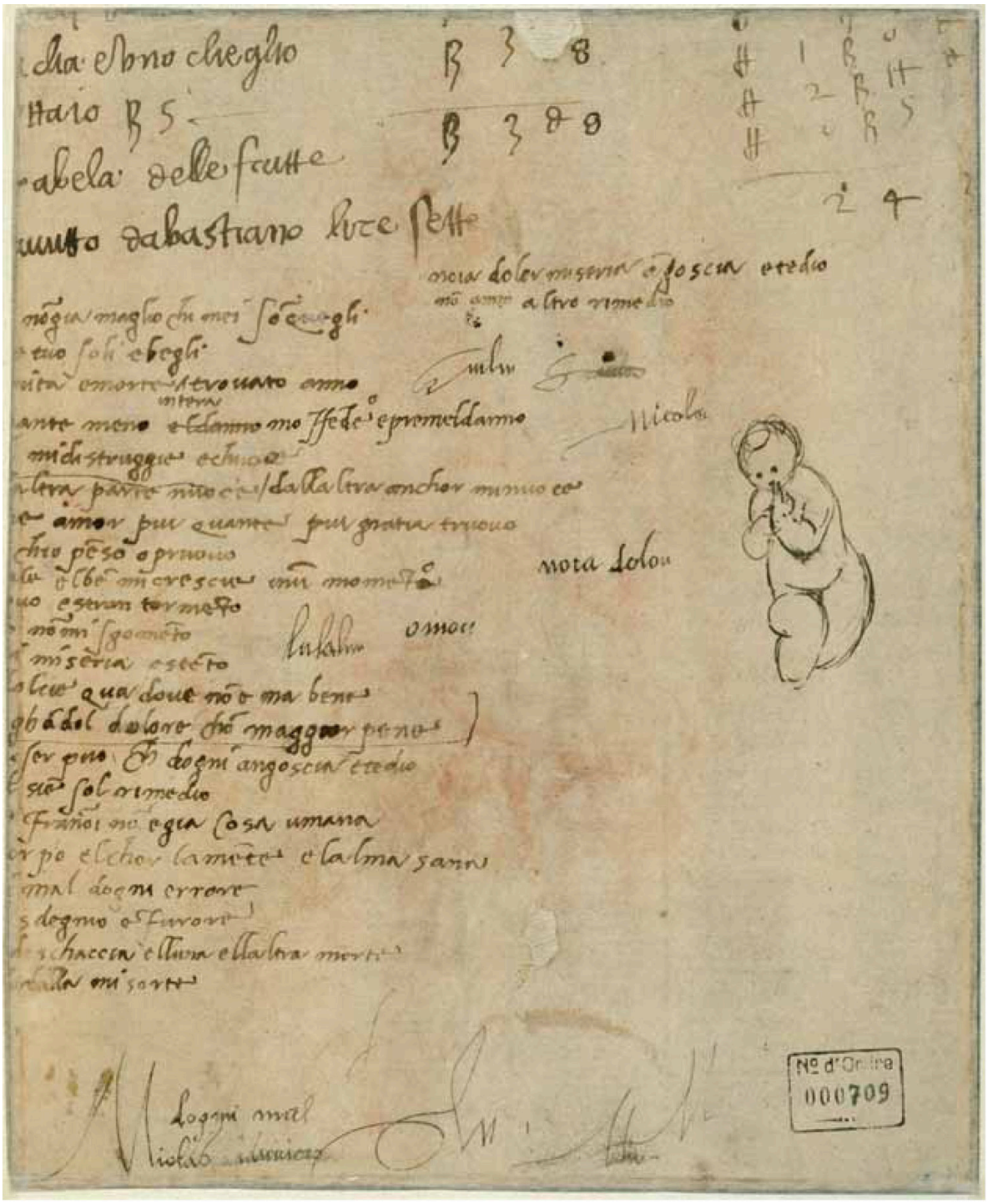
I emphasize the question of *finito* vs. *non finito* because the verso demands to be understood as the kind of palimpsest that can only be viewed across time and among multiple hands. As soon as we consider the verso, we realize that the sheet has been cut down, in order to privilege the recto visual production over the multiple, largely textual, materials on the verso. Fortunately, not so much has been lost that we cannot observe the riot of activities that took place on the drawing's back side. These include prose referring to payment of one Sebastiano and two separate sets of numbers, probably in different scripts, neither of them Michelangelo's. Then, filling the bulk of the space, there are twenty-two lines of verse in the artist's own handwriting, the left side truncated. The first fourteen, which are separated by a horizontal line from the rest, Girardi reconstructs as the sonnet "Amor non già, ma gli occhi mei son quegli," while he transcribes the remaining group of lines as a separate (fragmentary) poem without attempting to fill in the gaps (". . . ser può che d'ogni angoscia e tedio").[19] These poetic lines are interspersed with several crossings out, corrections, and insertions, also autograph. In addition, there are a number of marginalia, at least some of which appear to be in a handwriting not seen elsewhere on the page. At times, these approximate graffiti or even baby talk: consider the clumsily written "lulalma," which may represent some sort of naive response to "l'alma" and to "elluna ellaltra morte" in the autograph verses. Or similarly, the incompetently written and unreadable pair of words (with initial capitals?) to the right of the first set of verses, or "Nicola," presumably inscribed by someone of that name.

At the bottom of the page, there is yet another set of enigmatic writings. "Dogni mal" seems of a piece with a couple of other marginal fragments ("noia dolor," "omor") in a handwriting that may or may not be Michelangelo's; there is also a possible rendering of his

name (by him or by someone else) and another word half scratched out, as well as some apparently non-alphabetic strokes that seem like flourishes or pen exercises. Finally, and to the right of the poetry, there is a pen and brown ink drawing of a putto in somewhat childlike style, composed out of a sequence of rounded shapes and with outlines that suggest a strong interest in shading. The attribution of this drawing, as between Master and various pupils, is disputed; but whoever produced the figure, it does not remotely resemble the figurative work on the recto in medium or manner.

Through some unreconstructable sequence of moves, then, this sheet of paper has passed several different times through Michelangelo's hands and through those of three or four other individuals close enough to him to have the freedom not only to look at it but also to use it for everything from official purposes to the most casual of doodlings. The composition of a gorgeous red chalk drawing—the medium itself rare and fragile[20]—has been deemed compatible not only with a wide range of paperwork, including the artist's own visual and verbal *pentimenti*, but even with the efforts of a half-literate apprentice at practicing his letters. Whether we can name any of these people (and many have detected the presence of the ever-available Mini, both in the account-book writings on the recto and in the putto on the verso) matters less than our opportunity to observe here the close interweaving of functions that a sheet of paper exercised as it made the rounds: it existed for aesthetic contemplation, for artistic education, for the projecting of pictorial projects, for the memorial noting of business information, for the subsequent reading or revising of that information, for the writing of verse, for the re-writing of verse, for the exhibition of a none-too-fully mastered literacy. And every one of these purposes was accomplished among different individuals and in the presence of all the other purposes. Viewed from the age of You Tube and Facebook, the sixteenth century begins to look strangely familiar.

2-12. Michelangelo, two nude men wrestling,*Corpus* 267r. Louvre 709. Louvre, Paris



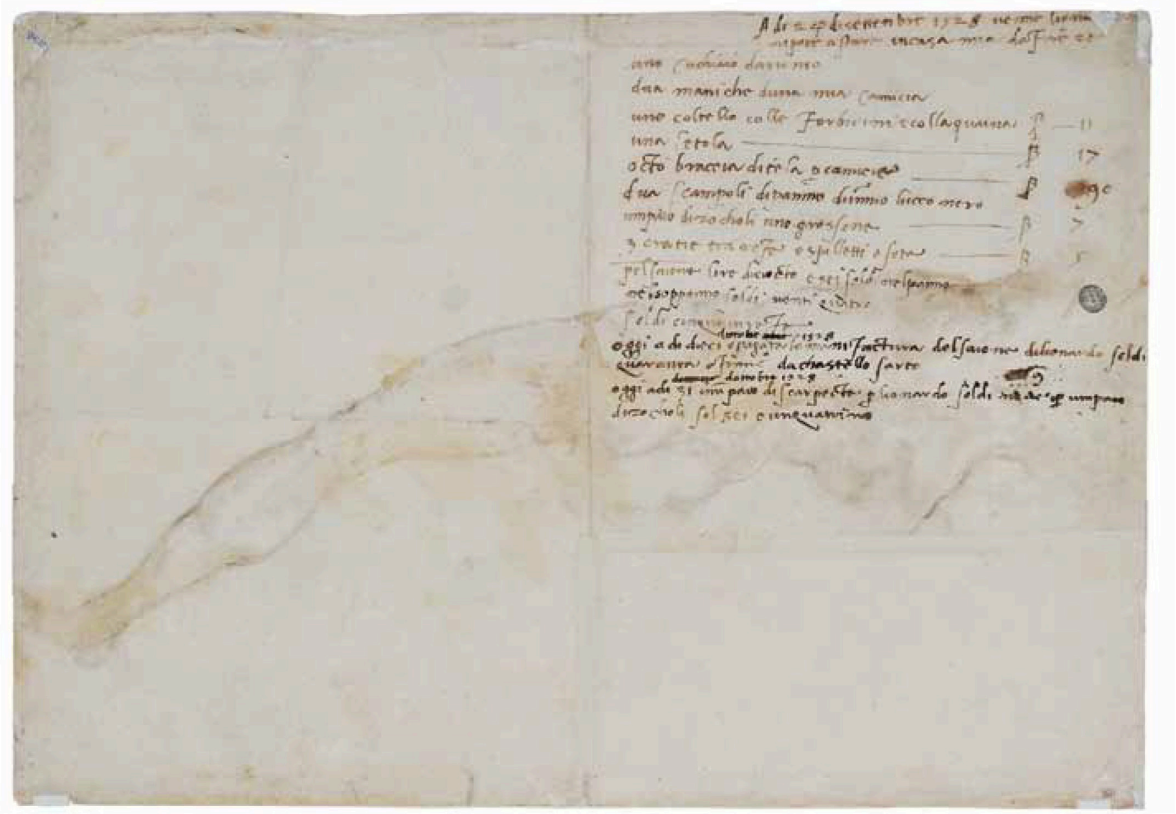
2-13. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 267v. Louvre 709. Louvre, Paris

To emphasize the circulation of these sheets among multiple persons is to intervene in a particular spot as regards both the history and the historiography of drawings. By the end of Michelangelo's career (and due, in part, to him), drawings on paper were very much public objects, whether because they had become collectible even if quite casually executed, or because they were being used as part of a system of negotiation with patrons, or because they were designed from the start as finished works of art no different from paintings or sculpture. Without reviewing the whole history of *disegni* and *disegno* here, we can assert that drawings were less likely to possess this kind of communal status in the fifteenth than in the

sixteenth century.[21] But the truth of the matter is that drawings were always a mix of public and private—that is, produced in the exercise of an artist's individual *fantasia* but available to be seen by others—even though the proportions of the mix may have changed radically from the beginning to the end of the Renaissance. Connoisseur-based modern scholarship on Michelangelo's drawings (to return to a subtheme of this book), by focussing so sharply on the end product that is supposed to have been generated by these sketches, has in its own way turned them into more public objects. Most recently, though, the best work in the field has reminded us that these works are born out of a special relation to the interiority of their makers, whatever happens to them subsequently.[22] What all this means in regard to the sheets we have been considering here is that the page containing the hastily sketched horizontal leg or the beautifully executed pair of wrestlers, both of them alongside sundry bits of writing, existed in both a private and a public space; even more significant, perhaps, is the fact that Michelangelo knew they possessed this amphibious reality.

2-14. *(facing)* Michelangelo, sketch of male nude seen from behind, *Corpus* 49r. Casa Buonarroti 73F. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

If these pages are neither entirely public nor private but rather objects engaged in a conversation, then perhaps the most revealing instances of multitasking paper are those where everything on the sheet has been set down by Michelangelo himself. In these cases, we can observe the artist in a one-man conversation as likely to be multi-voiced, cacophonous, and filled with non sequiturs as any encounter among diverse contemporaries. Let us consider as an example one of the most beautiful of all Michelangelo's drawings (Figures 2-14, 2-15), consisting of a male nude seen from behind.[23] It has variously been described as a study from life, or an imitation after an ancient sarcophagus, or a drawing based on a wax model produced by the artist himself; and there are question marks concerning its destination as well, since it is in the style of figures in the *Battle of Cascina*, and yet no such body actually appears in the copy we have of that composition. What has never been doubted is Michelangelo's authorship. It is clearly an early effort, whether for *Cascina* or not, but it is also one of the most finished works on paper of his entire career (within the limits of the truncated body), with a complex net of cross-hatchings to suggest light and shade as they play across the figure's musculature.



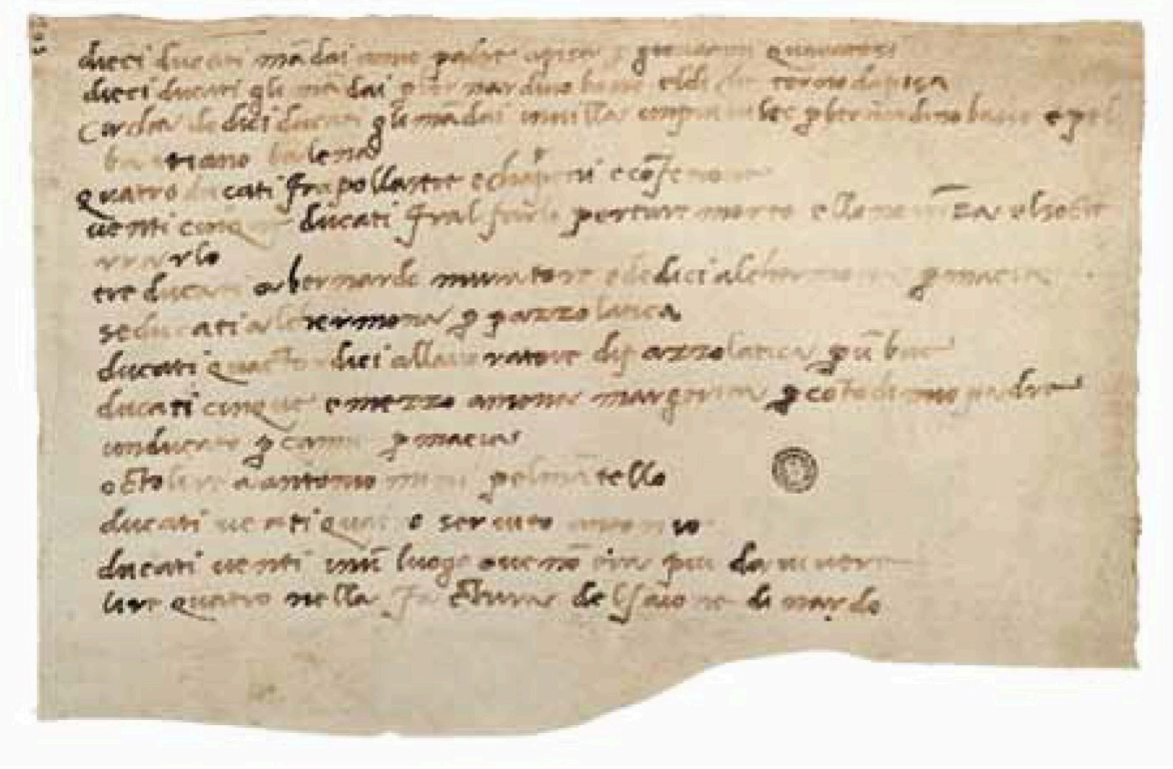
2-15. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 49v. Casa Buonarroti 73F. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

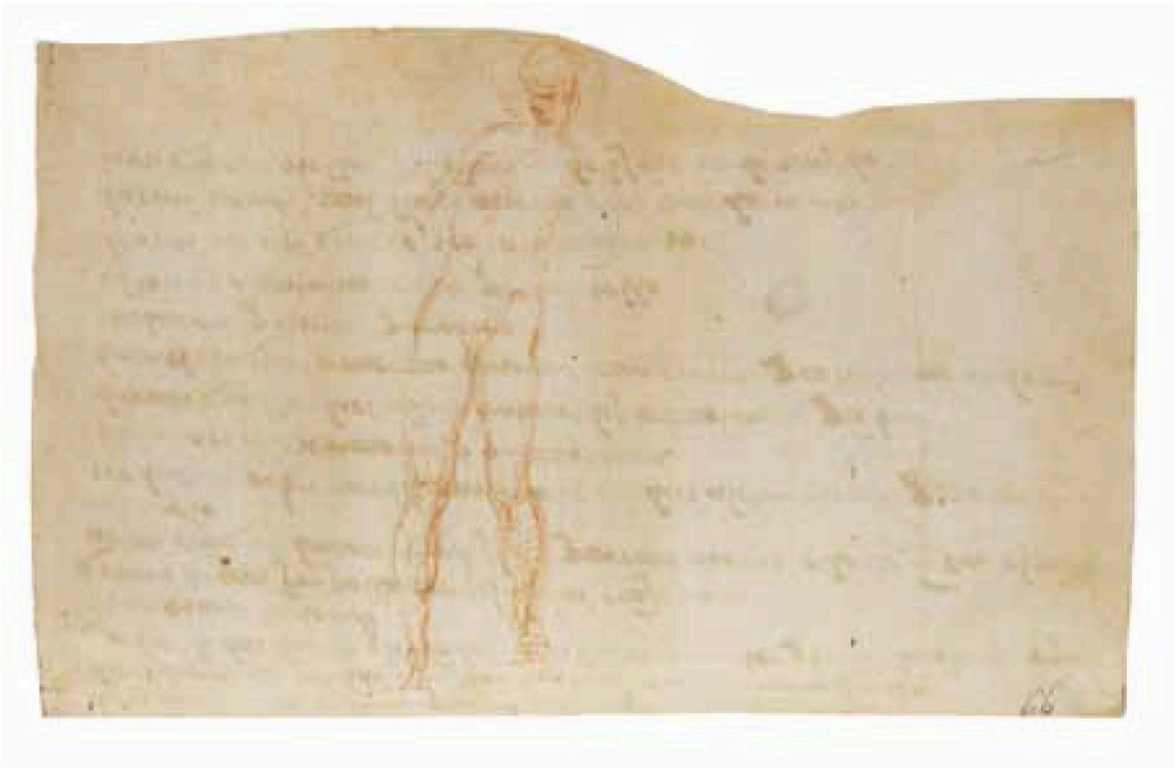
It is clear that for some considerable period of time the drawing reposed in solitary splendor on the recto of this large sheet. Then, and with no regard for the integrity of the image, it was folded in four. Three of the quadrants on the verso remain empty, but one is given over to a motley set of household notations, appearing roughly in three groups. First, Michelangelo records the fact that his nephew stayed in his house in Florence in 1528; then, in what seems a separate piece of writing with a different layout, he inscribes a catalogue of purchases (silver spoon, shirt cuffs, etc.), with some of their prices arranged in corresponding columns; and finally, again in normal prose, he sets down two records, dated 10 and 31

October 1528, referring to payments made on behalf of the same nephew.[24] This last segment is notable for a messy sequence of cancellations.

To our post-Romantic aesthetic sensibilities, it is not surprising that such an extraordinary masterpiece, on which the artist had lavished all his finesse, should be retained within his studio for several decades; what is astonishing, however, is that in the course of those years it should be folded up and then used for the most mundane of purposes—the more so because, while the drawing is marvelously perfect, the writing is splotchy and haphazard. But what is to us anomalous may have its own kind of logic. However much effort went into producing the pen-and-ink drawing in 1504, the occasion of that effort was long past, and some 180 square inches of free space remained on the back of the sheet. When, in the course of twenty-five years, the sheet was folded, we cannot guess. But it presents itself in that form as perfectly suited to a time when (let us speculate) Michelangelo is particularly annoyed with footing the bill for his nephew's expenditures; and the piece of paper has lost all its aura as a relic of *Cascina manquée* and has simply become the go-to spot for the woes of playing rich uncle. The two sides of the page, word and image, seem sublimely irrelevant to each other.

Such irrelevances may tell their own story, however. By way of parallel and contrast, let us consider a red chalk sketch of a nude man (Figures 2-16, 2-17), produced some quarter century after the Cascina-related drawing. [25] This work has raised some doubts in the scholarship about its subject matter, since it might figure either in a *Noli me tangere* or a *Resurrection*; but, almost as much as the other nude, it has been widely accepted as an autograph work of the Master. Although this chalk figure appears as the hastiest of sketches, it is in its own way as magnificent as the pen-and-ink drawing—to quote deTolnay: "con un tratteggio delicatissimo, realizzato con mirabile leggerezza di mano e che tiene conto del bianco della carta come di una forma positiva convessa, mescolato con l'aria."





2-16 and 2-17. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 256r,v. Archivio Buonarroti I fol. 96. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

Once again, though, its flipside is used for the notation of mundane household matters—but with some critical differences. First of all, in this case all the marks on the paper seem to have been inscribed around the same time, ca. 1531, when the projects conforming to the figure's iconography were most heavily engaging the artist and when the circumstances apparently referred to in the text were likely to be occupying him. Secondly, we have here a drawing that, however brilliant, seems to have been tossed off in an instant; indeed, it is most notable for the extra little *pentimento* head that seems to shift the position of the figure so as to render it almost in motion. And the curious shape of the paper, which deTolnay seems to find intrinsic to the design (rather than, as would be usual, a result of being cut down so as to enshrine a specially privileged drawing), adds to the aleatoric, or impromptu quality of the work. By contrast, the writing on the recto, which is also comfortably contained within the odd shape of the page, is elegant, careful, and almost entirely without corrections.

The content of that writing may help us see more complex balances of drawing and text than we saw in the earlier case. On the verso, then, a supremely graceful representation of a sacred subject; on the recto:

dieci ducati mandai a mio padre a Pisa per Giovanni Quaratesi
dieci ducati gli mandai per Bernardino Basso el dì che tornò da Pisa
circha dodici ducati gli mandai in villa im più volte per Bernardino Basso e pel Bastiano Balena
quattro ducati fra pollastre e chapponi e confetione
venticinque ducati fra 'l farlo portare morto e ll'onoranza e 'l socterrarlo

I sent ten ducats to my father in Pisa for Giovanni Quaratesi
I sent him ten ducats for Bernardino Basso the day he returned from Pisa

I sent him about twelve ducats in town several times for Bernardino Basso and for Bastiano Balena

Four ducats for chickens and capons and sweets

Twenty-five ducats to have him carried dead and for the rites and to bury him[26]

This list of expenditures turns out to contain within itself a diversity that (at least to our eyes) is even more shocking than the contrast between a beautiful drawing and a check stub, since the elliptical 'l (from "fra 'l farlo portare morto") whose body had to be transported, given a memorial service, and buried, was almost certainly Michelangelo's father, his exequies being tucked in here among expenditures for chickens, capons, and (later) oxen and a coat for none other than Antonio Mini—whose salary, also mentioned later on this list, is the only item that comes close in cost to the funeral for Lodovico. If, in 1531, Michelangelo was more or less simultaneously doodling his way toward a *Resurrection* and managing his business and his father's estate, it is not at all clear which activity had priority and, indeed, whether they ought to be considered separate.

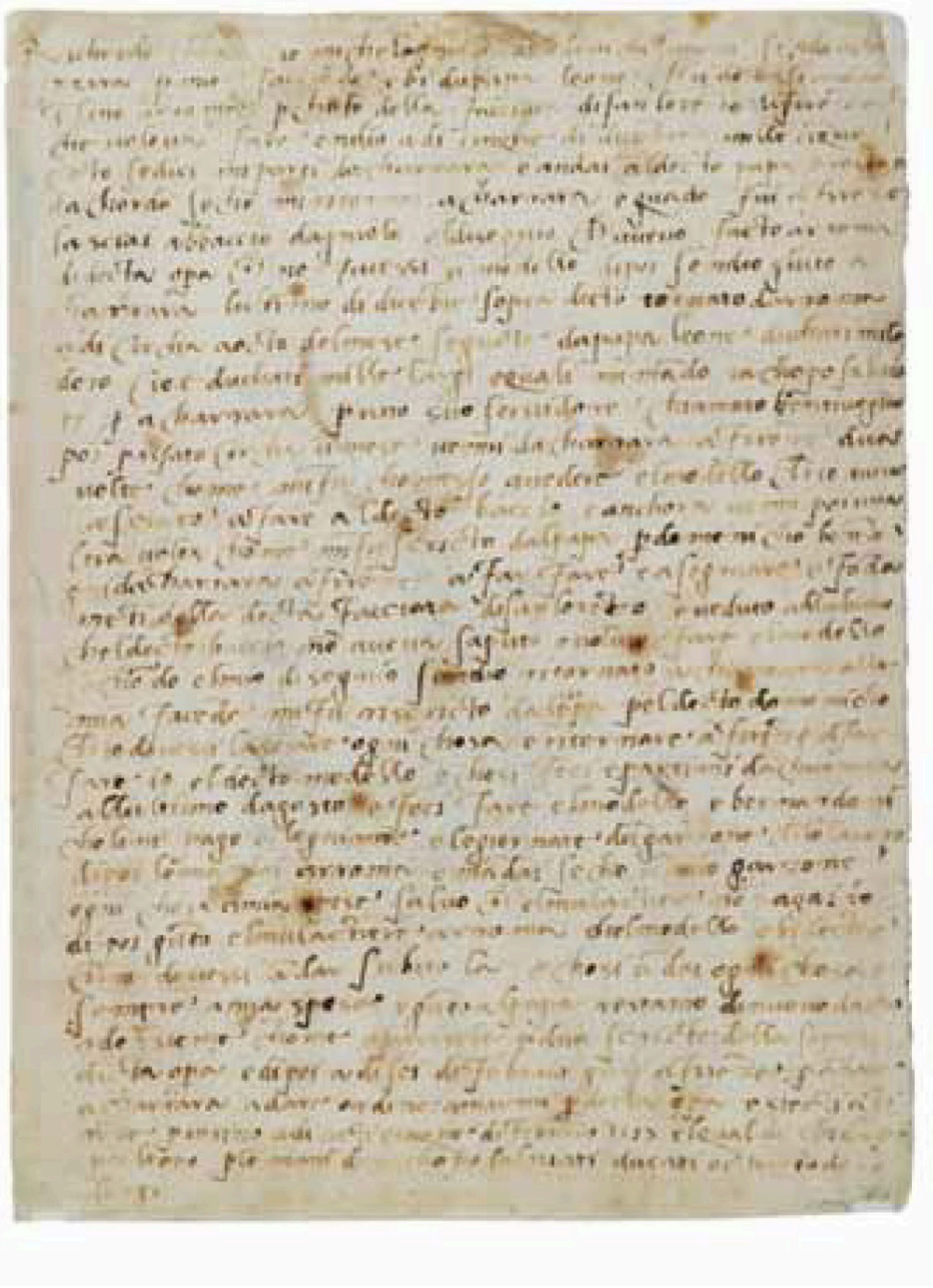
Here, as elsewhere, we witness Michelangelo as a fanatically precise record-keeper—in effect, a list-maker; and it may be that this very mode of the list, in which highly diverse matters can be represented in parallel form, linked by the common term of money, invites a special tolerance for incongruity. Whether oxen and funeral expenses represent the same sort of strange bedfellows as sacred sketching and bookkeeping, it is difficult to say. But their intimate proximity here suggests what may be an unexpected, to us paradoxical, form of difference. Financial records exist for archival purposes, as evidence in case of eventual disputes, and are therefore built to last; an inspired trifle like the nude on the verso of this sheet is designed as the most temporary stage of an ongoing process, potentially expendable once it has been superseded. Nothing prevented Michelangelo from producing these divergent expressions in closeness of space and time. Which of them contains the greater value may depend on who is looking at them and who is holding on to them.

Yet all these comparisons and contrasts may be more ours than Michelangelo's. The two drawings we have just considered seem to set up oppositions between word and image, or between art and commerce, in stark dialectical terms. But the experience of the whole archive teaches us rather to see the multiples in the artist's life as far more difficult to compartmentalize. Already within his lifetime, Michelangelo was recognized for the extraordinary range of his professional roles, including painter, sculptor, architect, and designer of military installations, to which I would add poet, bookkeeper, and recording secretary.[27] What is noteworthy as between these two lists is that, while paper figures as a mere (though significant) adjunct in carrying out the first, canonical, set of occupations, it is fundamental and defining to the second. In later chapters, I will have occasion to ask whether Michelangelo grows into his role as a poet in part because he is constantly putting pen or chalk to paper for design purposes.[28] Even more striking, because it is more idiosyncratic, is his habit of keeping records.

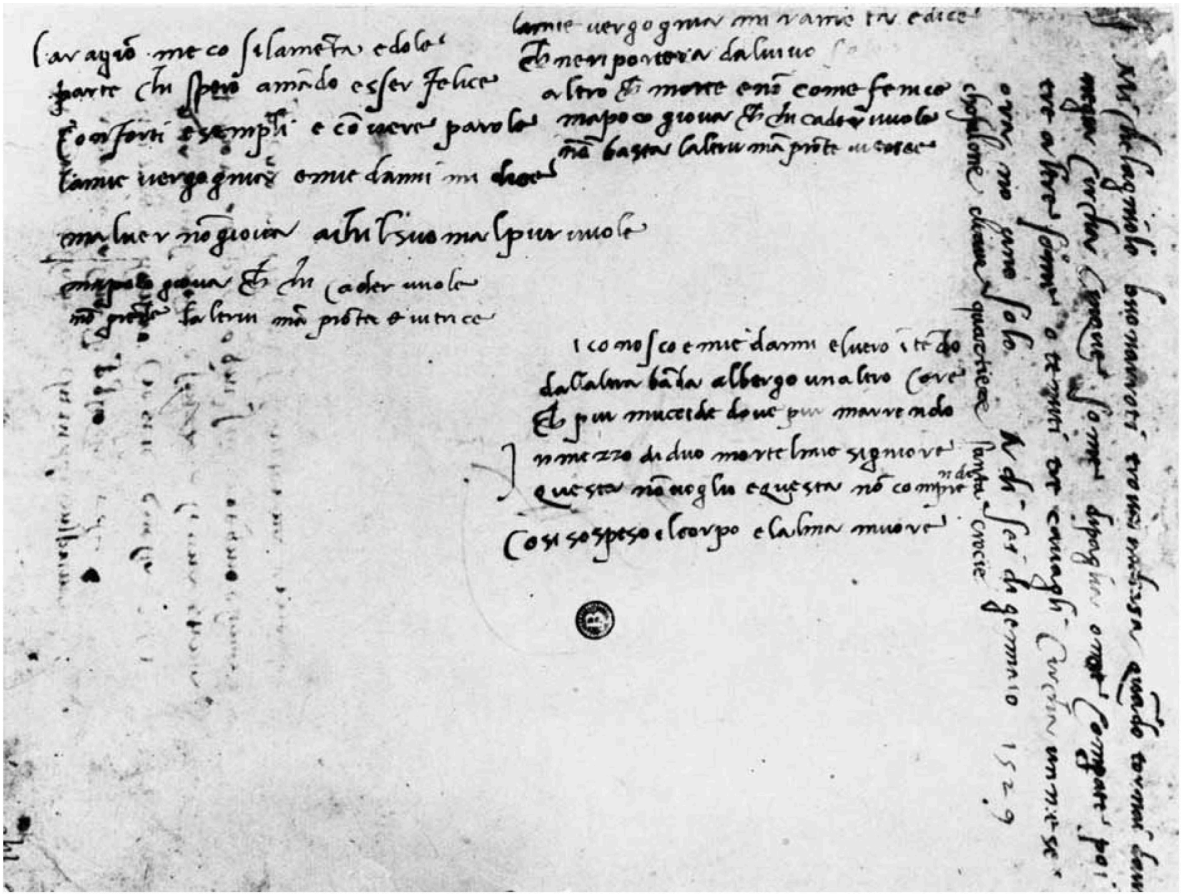
For all the superb editorial work that has been done on Michelangelo's *ricordi*, including their interrelation with his voluminous epistolary production, remarkably little has been said about the impulse behind this activity and the forms into which it developed. If we add the three hundred or so *ricordi* to the (approximately) three hundred poems, five hundred letters, and six hundred drawings that constitute Michelangelo's work on paper, we have not only a sort of primitive census of his output, but also a set of ways to think about what he has in mind whenever he commits himself to composition on a page. So far as the *ricordi* are concerned, Michelangelo was, in addition to all those careers listed above, a CEO; [29] and it is

noteworthy that he understood this responsibility as including a meticulous habit of documentation in his own handwriting. Doubtless, this was to a degree fueled by a certain paranoia on his part and by the fractious and litigious nature of a productive network that needed to encompass everyone from marble hewers in Carrara to princely and papal patrons in Florence and Rome. But what begins in 1508 as a simple recording of budgetary needs and expenditures (on one side of the page, "per chonto della sepultura mi bisognia duchati quatro ciento . . ."; on the other, "per un paio di chalze | per la foder d'un g[i] ubone di quoio . . ."),[30] set down on paper partly with a view toward prevailing in the event of future debate, his mode of performing this legalistic act soon turns into a kind of obsessional need to write down the past of his own life: "Io Michelagnolo Buonarroti . . . ," "Richordo come . . . ." Among the hundreds of autograph records that we possess (residue, no doubt, of many more that have been lost), these phrases, endlessly repeated, introduce a special sort of documentary autobiography, a monument of formalized memory and self-justification.

If the maintenance of an ongoing journal detailing the critical events in the art business is a private act with possible public consequences, it has more than a little in common with the sketching of potential art works (not to mention the writing of letters and the composition of lyric poetry). And a sheet such as we find in the Casa Buonarroti (Figures 2-18, 2-19), where the drawing on the recto and the writing on the verso are both developed to high levels of precision, begins to seem a little less anomalous.[31] The *ricordo*, which concerns moneys disbursed for marble from Carrara, the fortunes of the model for San Lorenzo, and relations with Pope Leo X, is of the most sophisticated kind. Far from being a mere list of expenditures committed to paper at the moment they are disbursed, this is a carefully considered and sequential narrative covering events that took place over a period of some years, all of which seem to be recollected from a still later perspective. Fittingly, it is composed in a quite formal handwriting, beginning with a large initial "R" for "Richordo" and completing itself by covering the entire space of the page as we have it without a single correction. Either it was copied from a rough draft or it sprang perfectly formed from the artist's brain and pen. The other side of the sheet contains a set of three drawings in chalk—two ciboriums and the side view of a sarcophagus—carefully detailed and nestled closely together. They resemble no existing work of the Master (though they have been associated with everything from San Lorenzo to San Silvestro in Capite to Santa Maria degli Angeli, thus covering a wide swath of times and places) but rather appear to be personal *fantasie* in a retro or even archaizing manner. Whether they predate or postdate the *ricordo*, they were not deemed incompatible with a formally inscribed piece of record-keeping. In the end, what links the two sides of the page is not a reference to the same artistic project but a similar kind of personal self-assertion committed to paper for the artist's own satisfaction, reflecting on the past but available, should the occasion arise, to be scrutinized by others in the future.



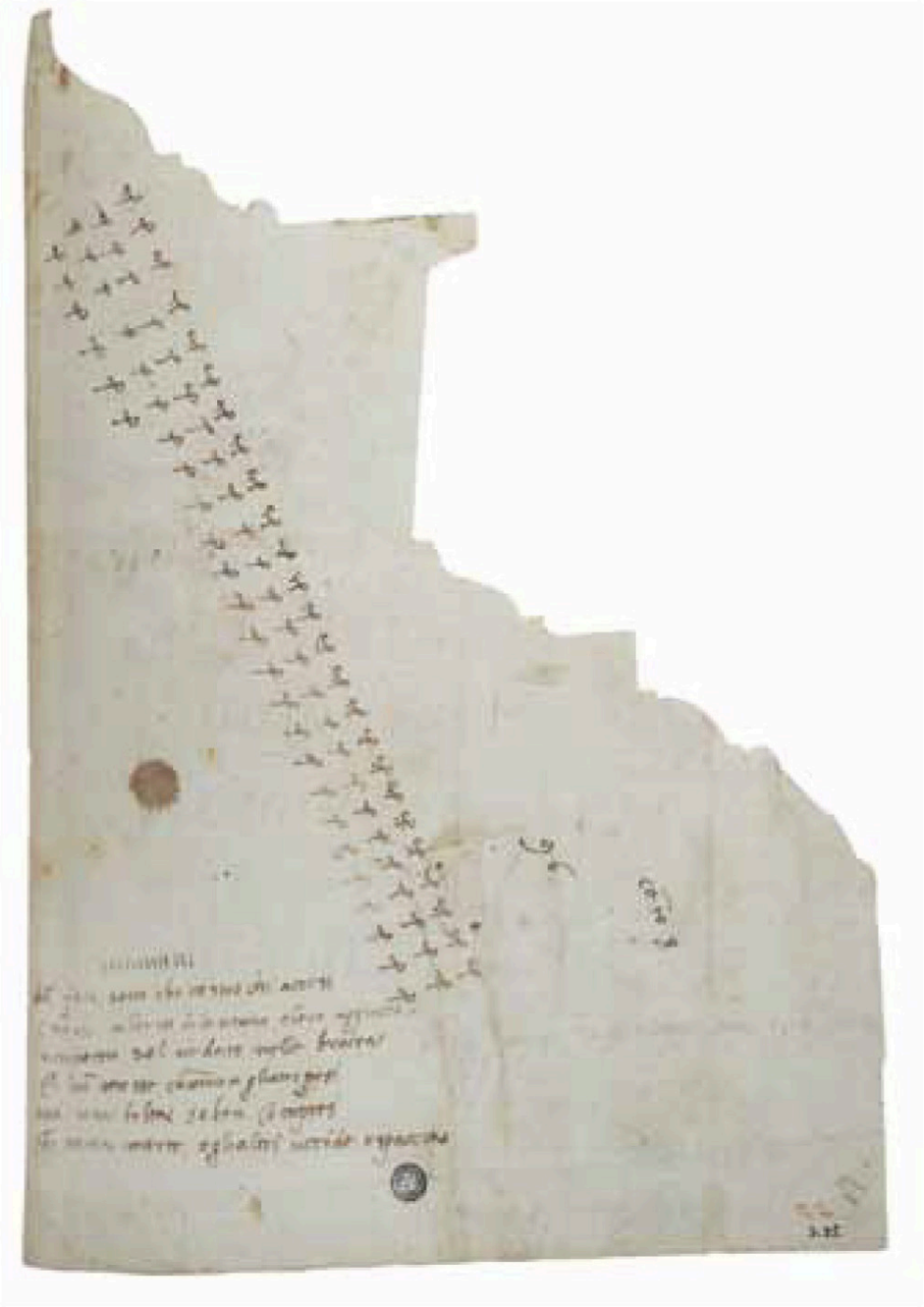
2-18 and 2-19. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 175r,v. Casa Buonarroti 110A. Casa Buonarroti, Florence



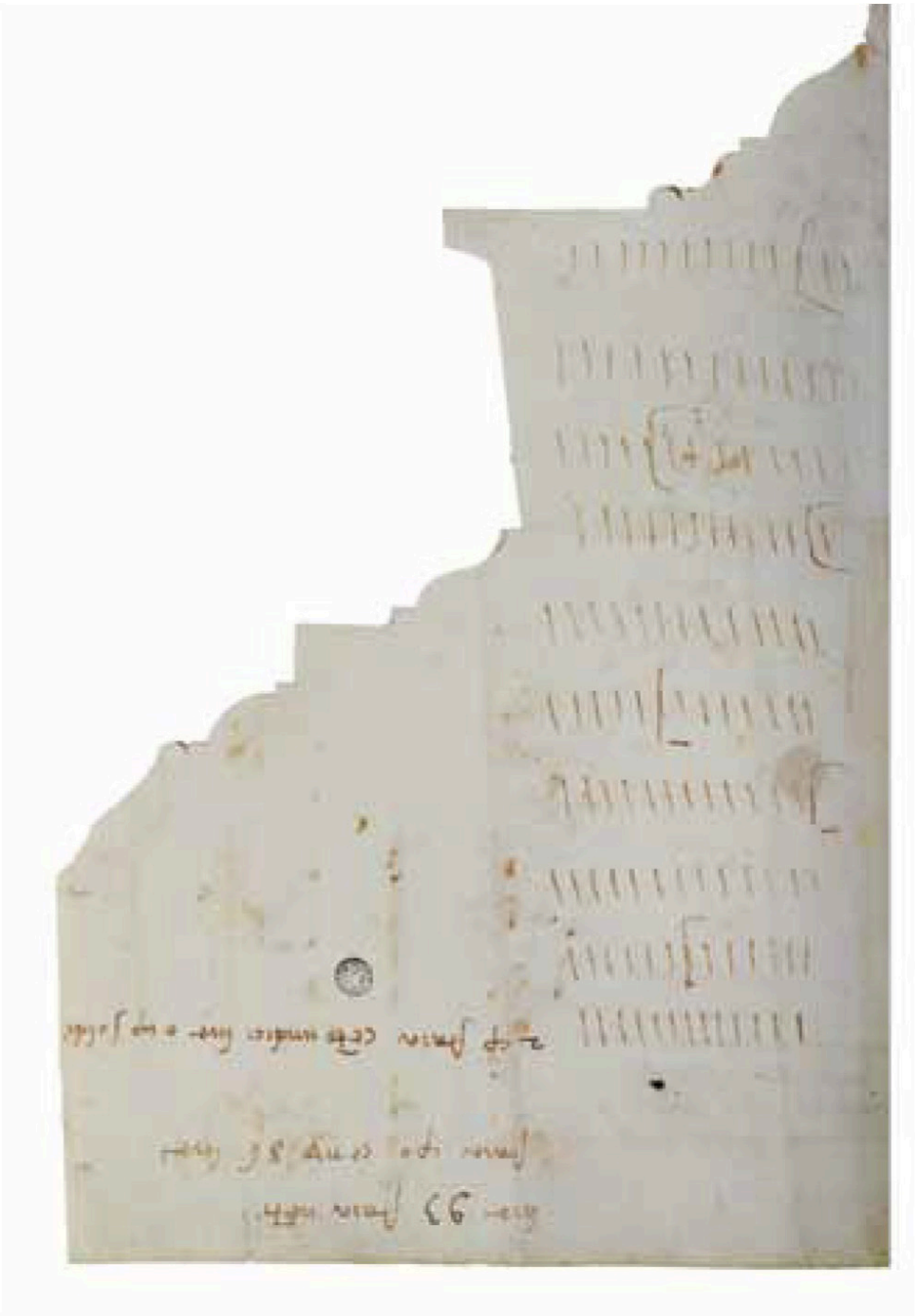
2-20. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 207bis. Archivio Buonarroti XIII 150. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

The elegance of this sheet, with its back-to-back symmetry of perfect handwriting and exquisite sketching, is more the exception than the rule when Michelangelo uses and re-uses a single page, however. More characteristic is a sheet like an Archivio Buonarroti fragment (Figure 2-20), which at one point passed through his hands for sketches relative to the kind of reclining figure represented by the *Night* in the Medici Tombs and the lost *Leda*.[32] At different times—earlier, later, or both—it also became the site for autograph drafts of sonnet material, which have been editorially designated as "La ragion meco si lamenta e dole" (G43) and "Mentre c'alla beltà ch'i' viddi in prima" (G44).[33] These are composed with the sheet in vertical position on the recto and in horizontal position on the verso. One of these segments ("I' conosco e' mie danni e 'l uero intendo | dell'altra banda albergo un'altro core . . .") has been penned atop what is left of the red chalk drawing. And this set of lines stops just short of a completely different sort of text, written at the head of the page with the sheet turned ninety degrees; here, the subject is not the trials of love but "I, Michelangelo Buonarroti, found in my house when I returned from Venice, approximately five *some* [a measure equalling approximately 1.6 hectoliters] of straw; I bought three more *some*; I had three horses for about a month, now I just have one."

Or we may consider a sheet that has been cut down to the shape of cornices for the doors that lead into the reading room of the Laurentian Library (Figures 2-21, 2-22), [34] which contains the number 4 written 81 times, ten groups of thirteen vertical ticks with a bracket after every twentieth line, several references to weights and moneys, plus:



D’un foco son i be’ vostr’ochi accesi
ch’arde altrui di lontano e loro aggiaccia;
um poter so u’è dato nelle braccia
che non mosse com’ muovon gli altri pesi.



2-21 and 2-22. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 539r,v. Archivio Buonarroti XIII fol. 127. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

> Your beautiful eyes are lit with a fire that burns others from far away and freezes them;
> I know that a power is given to you in your limbs that is not moved as they move others' weights.[35]

Or an Uffizi page (Figures 2-23, 2-24), inscribed variously with chalk and ink, in which the faint remains of poetic material (roughly, in what is legible: "rendigli al cor ... tuo diva faccia") are included among an extremely heterogeneous set of notations and penstrokes, as well as an even more motley assortment of drawings featuring a head, a weapon, fortifications, and, on the verso, a horse and rider.[36] It would be as misguided to construct a consistent narrative

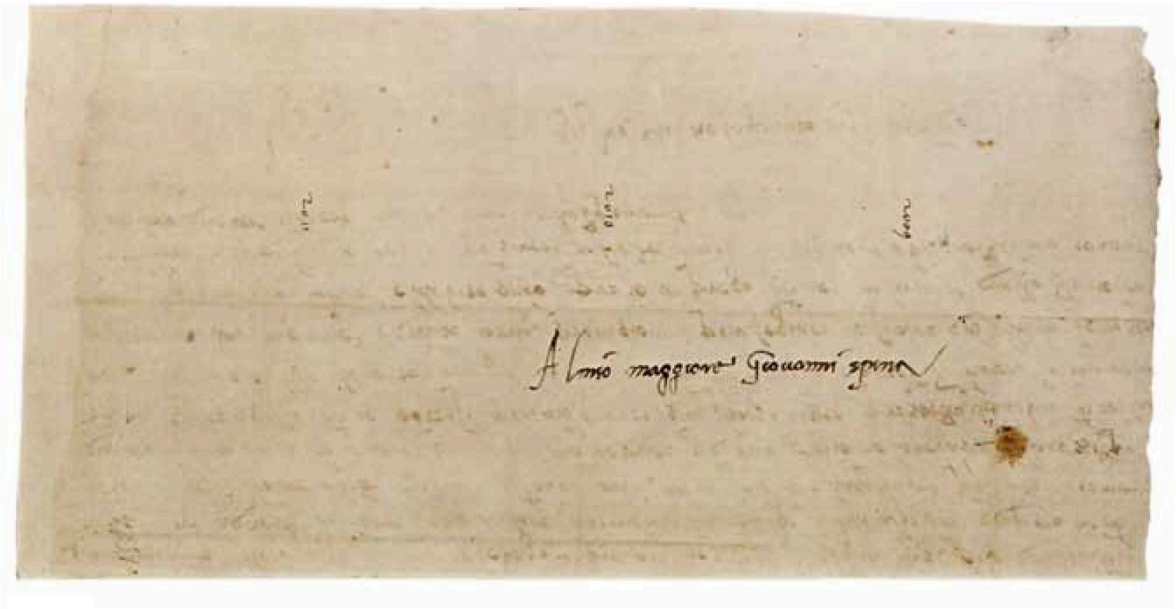
among these expressions as it would in the case of a sheet such as we considered at the beginning of this chapter (see Figures 2-1, 2-2), where three or four separate people were responsible for what landed on the page. The difference is significant, though. Whatever the grabbag of items that Michelangelo lays upon a sheet, they are all his. Furthermore, what they generally have in common is the act of self-assertion, whether that takes the form of *I remember* or *I paid* or *I love* or *I am representing the world to myself as I see it through my eyes*. Collectively, they reveal not only self-assertion but also self-consciousness, which we must understand as further intensifying the experience of seeing his previous work as he composes new work in its immediate proximity.

2-23 and 2-24. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 379r,v. Uffizi 14412F. Uffizi, Florence

And this self-consciousness, whether he was conscious of it or not, needs to be understood as an integral part of Michelangelo's process. It is not possible to construct the scene in which the artist seizes a particular piece of paper so that he may put marks on it. We cannot guess how miserly or profligate he was with this raw material, nor what might have induced him to lay hold of a fresh sheet (and he did that at least 1,500 times) or what, alternatively, dictated the choice of some tiny remnant of space on a page that was already well used. What is certain is that he was not afraid of working in cramped surroundings. Indeed, for whatever reason, that was the way he worked most of the time. If we leave the matter of written text out of it, we would still notice that only a small minority of his drawings sit alone on sheets of paper[37]—and of those, many repose in solitude because they have been sheared off from larger, more crowded pages by early collectors who did not share his (or my) taste for close encounters and heterogeneity. All of which is to say that for a strong-willed, self-driven artist like Michelangelo, practices like these cannot be relegated simply to the realms of accident or necessity. His work demonstrates that there is for him a powerful aesthetic that comes from the regular, necessary, and voluntary experience of composing new expressions in the midst of old ones.

In this regard, let us consider another Archivio Buonarroti page (Figures 2-25, 2-26).[38] At some point, this was a larger sheet of paper, on one side of which Michelangelo produced in black chalk an extensive architectural sketch probably related to the Medici Tombs. The other side, at least of the segment that we possess, is blank except for a sequence of tiny numbers written in pen. Subsequent to the black chalk sketching, Michelangelo composed, in his neatest script, a letter to Giovanni Spina, not on the empty recto, where there was plenty of room, but atop a drawing which had been executed for a project that was still underway and

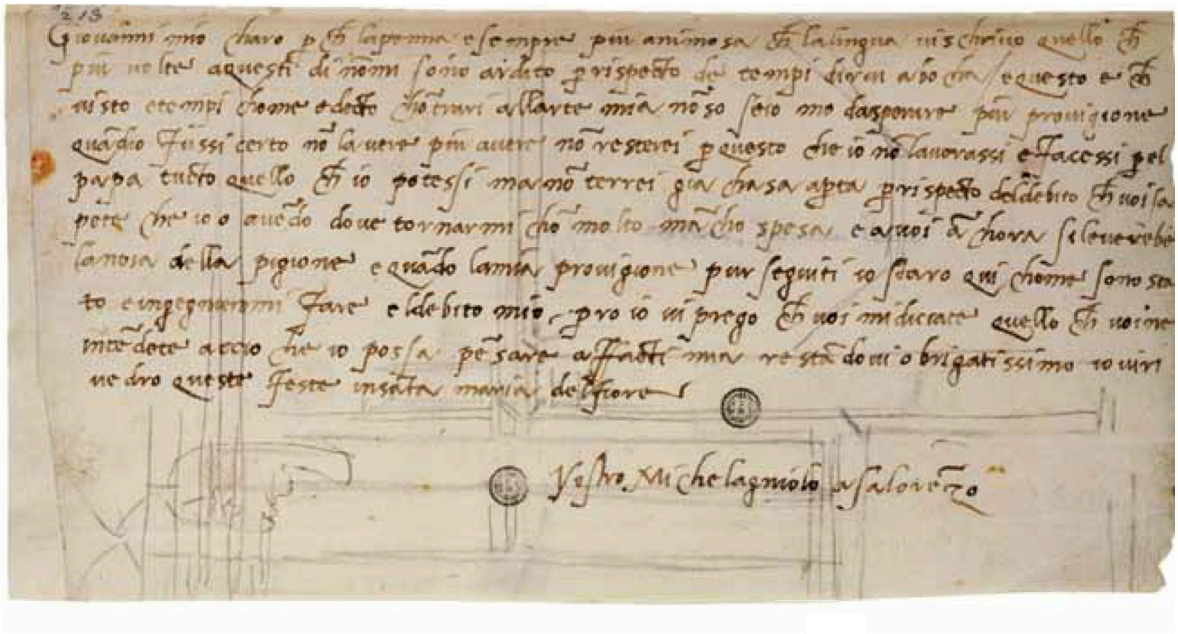
in a manner that was busy enough to interfere with the subsequent text's legibility. What is more, the sheet has been cut to precisely the dimensions of this letter, thus truncating the sketch; and, since only the artist himself is likely to have privileged the letter over the drawing, it may well be that he carved the paper at the time he wrote the text. At that moment, he must also have placed the sole bit of text on the recto (apart from the minuscule numbers), which was the name of the addressee: "Al mio maggiore Giovanni Spina."



2-25. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 278r. Archivio Buonarroti V fol. 38. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

What we see here is not the avoidance of prior marks on the paper but an active engagement with them. Given a virtually clean recto, Michelangelo opts to overwrite the drawing on the verso and (perhaps) to slice it up. Did he actually intend to send a letter that contained the truncated remnants of a quite extensive architectural sketch? The elegant handwriting and the address on the reverse side suggest that he did; on the other hand, the fact that this sheet remained in his archive may indicate that it was never sent. The contents of the letter merely add to these perplexities. Spina represented the Roman Salviati bank in Florence; the artist's previous letters to him are for the most part brief instructions concerning the transfer of moneys, though with an increasing undercurrent of concern about the salary that he expects from the pope as he pursues the Medici family project.[39] This letter, the last we have in the series and with the curious "mio maggiore" that suggests a more stratified relationship than is evident in previous communiqués, is rather in the nature of an open ultimatum: unless I can be assured of a stipend, he says, I had better close down the house that has been provided for me to do this work. Both the delicacy and the importance of this message—not to mention the tone of (insincere?) deference—are ill suited to the medium of a manifestly second-hand piece of paper. If he meant to send it in this form, it would convey a complicated set of mixed messages alongside its text: poverty? parsimony? artist hard at work on a project coyly half-visible beneath the text? If, as I think more likely, this was to be a draft, however perfectly its form simulated a final version, then we see Michelangelo choosing to layer his anxious words over the artifacts of a métier that he presumably considers more congenial than letterwriting or entrepreneurship. Whichever it may be, he leaves one notable feature of what is presumably the pre-existing draftsmanship uncovered by text: a gargoyle-

like profile caricature (Figure 2-27) that sits in parallel space to his signature. Only there has he enshrined his earlier work, as a message either to Spina or to himself.



2-26. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 278v. Archivio Buonarroti V fol. 38. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

And, as we have seen before, it is that self-conversation that may in the end be the most revealing. There is a very late drawing in the Ashmolean (Figure 2-28) whose authorship has never been doubted but which has sustained a lively controversy as to its subject matter. Clearly, the subject is a sacred one, and, just as clearly, the figure on the left is the Virgin Mary. All the older literature named the event as the Annunciation, but in 1966 Heinrich Pfeiffer proposed (in a brief article characterized by somewhat inferential reasoning) that it was the transfigured Christ appearing to his Mother on the morning of the Resurrection.[40] Present opinion favors the latter designation, even though it is almost unknown as an iconographic subject among Italian Renaissance artists. My interest is not so much in settling this dispute as in reading the text (or what remains of it) that Michelangelo has placed on the sheet just above the Virgin's head:

2-27. Detail of Figure 2-26

2-28. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 400r. Ashmolean 345. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

[die]ci V [i.e., scudi] al pictore p[er] dio
[an]dro a Pasquino p[er] mandare
a chasteldura[n]te
legnie

Ten scudi to the painter, for [?] God. I will go to Pasquino to have him send wood to Casteldurante.

In the period between 1556 and 1561, the artist was involved in sorting out the affairs of his servant Urbino's widow, Cornelia Colonelli, who had retired to Casteldurante; in a number of transactions during this time, one Pasquino served as the trusted go-between. Most likely, there are two transactions referred to here, one involving wood and the other involving

painting, perhaps two works by Marcello Venusti after Michelangelo's designs that were in the widow Colonelli's possession and were being sought by the Duke of Urbino.[41] What matters more than unravelling the particulars of these circumstances, however, is the fact that Michelangelo would insert this most mundane of *ricordi* in the sanctified space of his drawing.

It is easy enough to see this little memorandum as yet another of the many instances of discrepancy between images and words that we have observed in this chapter, but this is an extreme case. Indeed, a number of scholars without any such agenda as mine concerning the significance of Michelangelo's writings on his drawings have observed that the placement of this message seems almost purposeful in the sacred context.[42] In fact, it was quite standard in medieval (and later) Annunciations to include a banner with the speech of the Angel written out in something like the position of Michelangelo's message here. And this particular conjunction of picture and word figures significantly in Dante's hugely influential ekphrasis of an Annunciation panel in *Purgatorio* X: "avea in atto impressa esta favella **|** *Ecce ancilla dei*, propriamente **|** come figura in cera si suggella" ("these words were imprinted in her attitude: *Ecce ancilla dei*, as expressly as a figure is stamped on wax").[43] How shall we understand this crowning case of incongruity, where Michelangelo seems not to have set down words by chance in the accidentally empty space of a drawing but to have willfully substituted his to-do list for the Word Made Flesh?

We are not, I think, witnessing some octogenarian act of supreme sacrilege. Nor would I claim that Michelangelo has designed a consistent composition with the bathetic message as its centerpiece. The issue, rather, is one of *in*consistency. The fact is that this is neither an Annunciation nor a Christ Appearing to His Mother but a piece of work in progress. Quite possibly, as some (e.g., deTolnay) have suggested, the drawing begins as the first and metamorphoses into the second. What is even more certain is that, however we wish to nail down its iconography, it appears as a continuous series of *pentimenti*; there is scarcely a line on the sheet that is not doubled or tripled by another line. Perhaps the artist's aged hand is not so steady, perhaps his aged mind is not so goal-oriented: whatever the cause, Michelangelo is working in a medium where he feels complete freedom to follow in whatever directions his hand and eye take him. And they take him toward the placement of words at an oddly canonical location in the midst of a figural scene. This curious act of multitasking, whereby the same page acts as both holy representation and personal Post-It, gives us a glimpse of the artist using his sheets of paper as a protean field of invention that recognizes neither the narrow decorum dictated by subject matter and style nor the traditional gulf separating image and text.

3
PICTURE WRITING

One of the time-honored ways of thinking about picture and word is that they belong side by side, that the most complete form of communication, guaranteeing the fullest response by the broadest audience, will be achieved in a medium that embraces texts and images working simultaneously to the same end. In Christian culture, this unity offers more than merely formal satisfaction, as witness Pope Gregory I's seventh-century pronouncement that "what scripture shows to those who read, a picture shows to the illiterate people as they see it," which made it possible for churches to be filled with graven images at the same time as they were places where Christian truth could be linguistically transmitted, all without fear that the pictorial form of the Word amounted to idolatry.[1] And within that theological domain, particular representations enshrined this efficacious conjunction: for instance, in Annunciations where Mary and the Angel are depicted, but the actual announcement itself—*Ecce ancilla domini* or *Ecce ancilla dei*—is rendered as written text. Dante both performs and complicates this practice with his ekphrasis of an Annunciation relief (*Purgatorio* 10) in which he locates the spoken words in a richly indeterminate space framed by the visual power of the art work, the possibility of summoning up real sacred speech, and the discursive force of his own poetic language. This entire section of the *Purgatorio* was highly influential on later ways of construing the relations between the Word, the word, and the image—and perhaps no one was so much influenced as Michelangelo.[2]

3-1. Pietro Perugino, *Moses in Egypt and Midian*. Sistine Chapel, Vatican Palace, Vatican State

So far as artistic practice is concerned, this yoking of text and image turns up in everything from illuminated manuscripts to illustrated editions of ancient texts to Vasari's (surprising) assertion that in adding what are essentially cartoon balloons to his Crucifixion panel in San Francesco at Pisa, "Cimabue was starting to shed new light and to open the way to invention by expressing the meaning of his painting with the help of words," to Mantegna's interest in classical script and his use of text in such diverse works as the Louvre *Vices* and the Hampton Court *Triumphs of Julius Caesar*, to the intricately coordinated practice we have already observed in Leonardo's notebooks.[3] Behind each of these instances is some theory or other, and often quite divergent ones: about how words and pictures are different, or the same; about how they contradict or complement each other; about the way they shape the response of their audience; about the hierarchy of the senses, focusing on the susceptibility of the eye versus the faculties of judgment that are understood, not quite logically, as entering through the ear. If I pass rather hastily through this territory, it is because Michelangelo, for all that he composed many texts and crafted many images, steers remarkably clear of this conventional realm where word and picture enter into a deliberate embrace. In fact, through all of his artistic practice, only once in his career —and quite early—does he place words next to finished pictures in the interest of mutual elucidation.

When Michelangelo came to do his work on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, there had already been in place for thirty years an extensive cycle of frescoes on the upper part of the walls. A group of artists, including Botticelli, Perugino, and Signorelli, had worked under the ideological supervision of Pope Sixtus IV to produce a set of narrative scenes in discrete and carefully boundaried segments illustrating, alternatively, the life of Moses and the life of Christ. Clearly, there are ways in which this highly ambitious fifteenth-century project set in motion a typological framework—correlations between the Old Testament and the New Testament, between the Old Law and the New Dispensation—that may have grounded and inspired the great historical sweep of the even more ambitious sixteenth-century project that Michelangelo was to realize in direct proximity to the earlier work.[4] Our question is: what role might text have played in these adjacent undertakings?

Around the narrative panels in the earlier Sistine project there is extensive faux-architectural framing in gold, into which is incised, over each of the narrative panels, a *titulus*, or verbal descriptive relative to the painting below it. This mixture of pictures and captions was neither revolutionary nor ubiquitous in Christian visual programming. The authority for such coordination of the verbal and the visual goes back, of course, to Pope Gregory and the idea that sacred image-making was the bible of the illiterate. The two systems of communication were commonly brought together in situations where those who commissioned the decoration had especially strong preacherly intentions, as for example in the tradition of Franciscan-dominated spaces that goes back to Assisi and forward to the milieu of Sixtus IV himself.[5] To be sure, Gregory's pronouncement (like so many *ut pictura poesis* formulations) doesn't quite hold up under close scrutiny, since the subject of the image—say, in the case of *Moses in Egypt and Midian* or *The Punishment of Korah* (Figures 3-1, 3-2)—may be far less intelligible than the words, so that the only hope for comprehension of the program would be a combination of viewing, reading, and listening to an explanatory sermon.

3-2. Botticelli, *The Punishment of Korah*. Sistine Chapel, Vatican Palace, Vatican State

Still, the Sistine arrangement does its heuristic job relatively well. If the Mosaic episodes are mysterious, there is always the possibility that typology itself will come to the rescue: Jesus' baptism may help identify the circumcision in the Moses story and the Sermon on the Mount may clarify the Mt. Sinai scene that lies directly across the room. But it is the *tituli* that work the hardest by managing in a small space both to name the subject of the picture—or the most prominent part of the subject, at any rate—and to point to its typological exegesis. So far as the literate and Latin-readers are concerned, at least (and, after all, the Sistine Chapel is hardly a parish of the common people), the texts of the *tituli* identify and interrelate the stages of these two lives and, by repeating terms like *lex*, *scripta*, and *evangelica*, they offer leitmotifs that amount to a mini-sermon in themselves. In addition, there is the prominent appearance of the injunction (paraphrased from Hebrews 5:4) "Nemo sibi assumat honorem nisi vocatus a deo tanquam Aaron" (Figure 3-3; "Let no man take unto himself the honor [of the priesthood] unless he was called to it by God, as was Aaron"), fictionally inscribed on the Arch of Constantine in Botticelli's *Punishment of Korah*. In the world of large-scale sacred depictions, then, Sixtus's program does virtually everything it can to nail down the response of the viewer and, as a result, Michelangelo comes to a space where typological lessons leave little room for uncertainty. Indeed, though the message may be all in favor of Christ's embodied form of the law, the medium owes quite a lot to the Old Dispensation's penchant for what is scripted.

3-3. Detail of Figure 3-2

3-4. Ghirlandaio (attrib.), Pope Clement I, Sistine Chapel, Vatican Palace, Vatican State

Things will be different on the ceiling. We cannot know what part of Michelangelo's plan was of his own devising and what part dictated by others. In fact, we know less about its origins than we do about those of the earlier work in the Chapel.[6] It is however clear that the typologies here are, to begin with, far more complex than the binary structure of the wall frescoes. And, more importantly for us, the aid offered by written text has all but disappeared. The creation, Adam and Eve, Noah, the biblical scenes in the pendentives and the medallions: in all these properly narrative parts of the ceiling, not a word is included in the design. We might surmise from this absence that, along with creating a more multi-layered theological scheme and a more intricately architectural topography, Michelangelo wished to leave viewers freer than the earlier Sixtus scheme had done to allow their eyes and their minds to wander; but that would be an argument

ex silentio in more ways than one. What we can more confidently assess are the places where Michelangelo *did* put words.

The artist's decision to inscribe text among the images in the room may have been a response to the least heralded part of the whole room's prior decoration, the images of the first thirty popes, which occupied the highest tier of the fifteenth-century wall decoration scheme, in the spaces between the windows and the pilasters (Figures 3-4, 3-5).[7] Unremarkable as they seem, these frescoed representations, rendered as three-dimensional standing figures inside a scalloped niche, comprise the only part of the earlier design where painting impersonates sculpture and architecture in such a way as to occupy (indeed, to expand) the real space of the room, a technique that Michelangelo will employ to a far greater extent. And it is these spatially intriguing figures who are labeled. So too, in the adjacent registers of his design, Michelangelo, uniquely within all his finished oeuvre, attaches names to his pictures.

Within the economies of the fifteenth-century decoration, the papal labels perform very different linguistic work from the *tituli*. The life stories of Moses and Christ are overdetermined in their textuality: the picture itself tells a story, the neighboring pictures help fill in and moralize the story, and the words inscribed around them further identify and interpret the story. For those with the necessary vantage point and comprehension, the ensemble performs a continuous cycle of interrelation. The images of the first thirty popes, on the other hand, are necessarily quite mute. There are no intrinsic visual cues to identify, say, Anacletus or Sixtus II, since no one knows what they looked like, and they can scarcely be said to figure in any familiarizing iconographic tradition. By way of compensation, the painters inscribed the faux statue bases with names, dates, and references to their martyrdom. But these crowded bits of lapidary information produce nothing like the cycle of interpretation that comes from the pairing of image and words with independent, and interdependent, powers to signify.

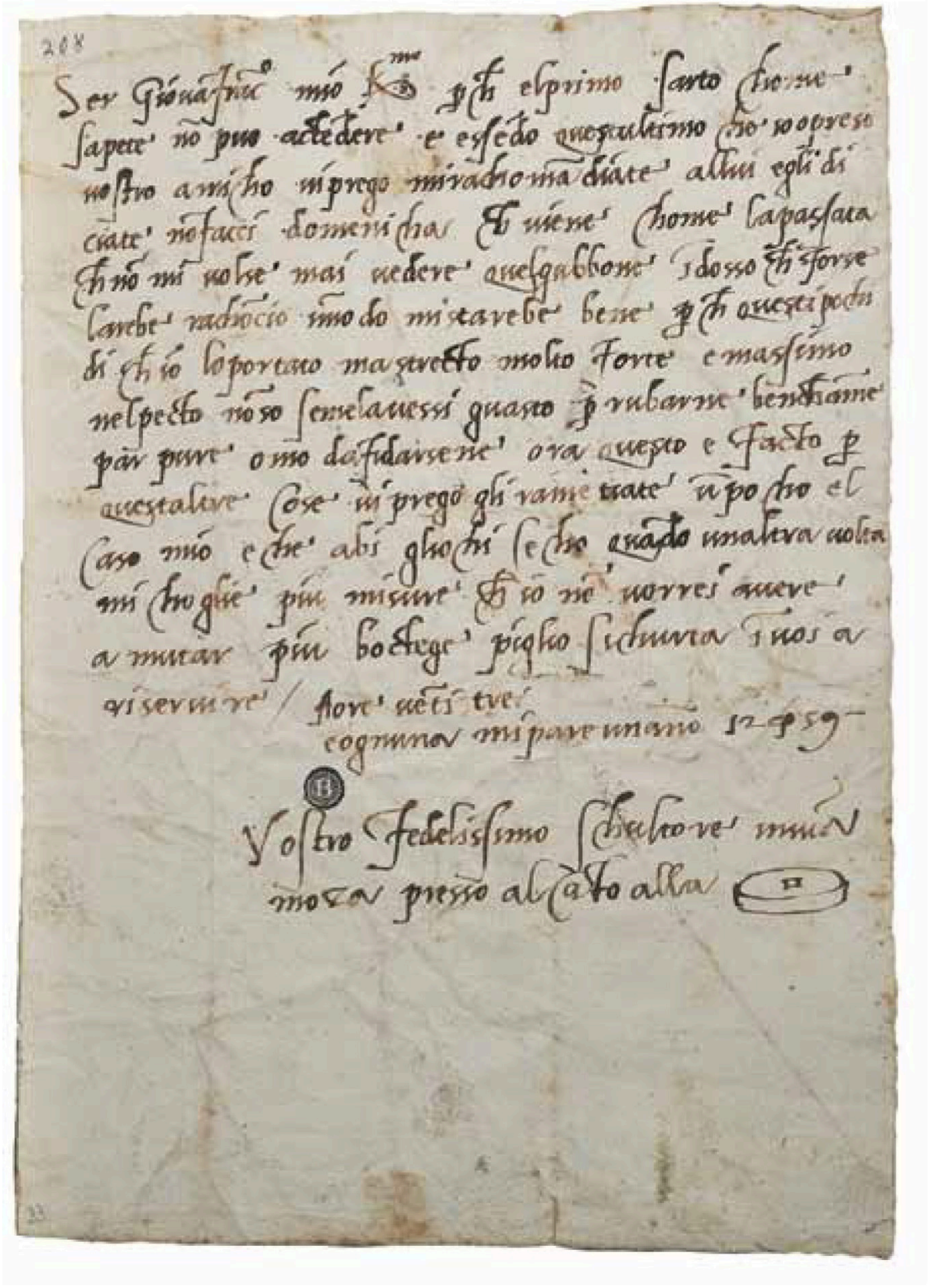
3-5. Ghirlandaio (attrib.), Pope Urban I, Sistine Chapel, Vatican Palace, Vatican State

3-6. Michelangelo, Ancestors of Christ: Amminadab group. Sistine Chapel, Vatican Palace, Vatican State

3-7. Michelangelo, Ancestors of Christ: Jesse group. Sistine Chapel, Vatican Palace, Vatican State

When Michelangelo places his Ancestors of Christ (Figures 3-6, 3-7) up against the early popes and arranges the lunette and spandrel figures to surround an elegant easel-like structure on which a series of names is written, he is both imitating the textual system that was already in place and multiplying its difficulty. In fact, the two sets of founding figures are quite comparable. It is not only that the pre-Constantinian popes bear a typological relation to the generations between Abraham and Jesus; it is also that both of these groups are largely beyond the reach of identification. The ancient subjects whom Michelangelo locates in the lowest register of the ceiling are, with a couple of exceptions, at least as hopelessly unrecognizable as the early popes.[8] His only sources are two completely non-descriptive catalogue texts from Matthew and Luke, which take the form of statements such as "Rehoboam the father of Abijah, | Abijah the father of Asa, | Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, | Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram" or "Nahshon, | the son of Amminadab, the son of Ram, | the son of Hezron, the son of Perez."[9] But Michelangelo is far less generous with information than the painters who preceded him. His text consists of nothing more than what are, for the most part, arcane Hebrew names, and the whole design precisely fails to do what the earlier writings had laboriously accomplished; namely, the anchoring of each (otherwise mysterious) portrait with its specific life story.

In fact, faced with a challenge of signification—How shall a viewer understand that the name "Amminadab" belongs with a certain picture? How is a scroll-reading Middle Eastern figure to evoke the identification of "Jehoshaphat"?—Michelangelo chooses not to fill in the blanks. He creates an enormous gallery of non-communicative portraits—in contrast, notably, to the very lively and highly differentiated faces of the Popes, which appear immediately below. In fact, Charles deTolnay's influential description of the Ancestors as the "sphere of shadow and death" has been unjustly discredited since the frescoes were cleaned.[10] It is true that the lunettes and spandrels are no longer covered in grey grime, but the newly restored condition of these figures only makes it more apparent that they refuse contact with the spectator and remain as little individuated as they are in the gospel texts where their names are originally found.



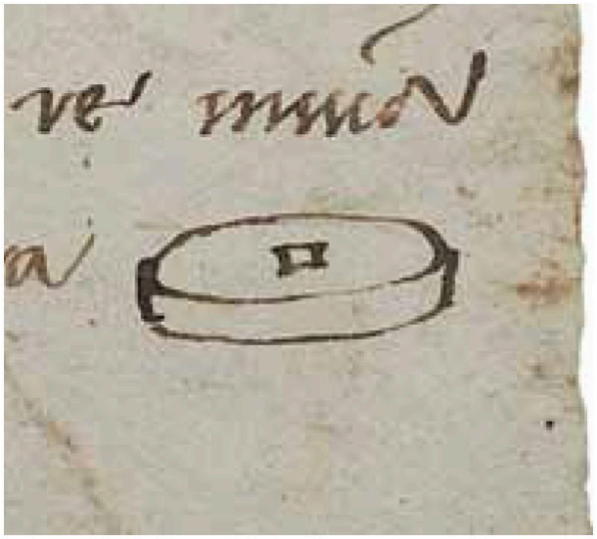
3-8. Michelangelo, letter to Giovan Francesco Fattucci. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

An undifferentiated roster of biblical names does not summon up pictures, and the pictures that Michelangelo paints—which, for instance, do not always conform in number or gender with

the adjacent names—float very free of the words. Whether Michelangelo was told to put names next to these figures or simply chose to do it, we can never know. But it is clear that he could hardly have created a less resounding, less determinate set of relations between picture and word. Switch Zerobabel with Abiud or one dreamy family group with another, and it would hardly matter to anyone but the most relentless iconography-hunter. The moral of the story is that Michelangelo is not, I think, comfortable with the kind of relation between words and pictures that amounts to a mutually confirming equation. Indeed, the closest he comes to joining them in such a parallel series is when both of them are essentially null sets.

In the subsequent fifty years of his career, no painting or sculpture is ever labeled again; words are to be found only on the drawings. In that medium, the presence of picture and text in purposeful parallel is highly infrequent; and when it does appear, it betrays a very different attitude about such conjunction than is apparent in the high seriousness of the Sistine typologies.

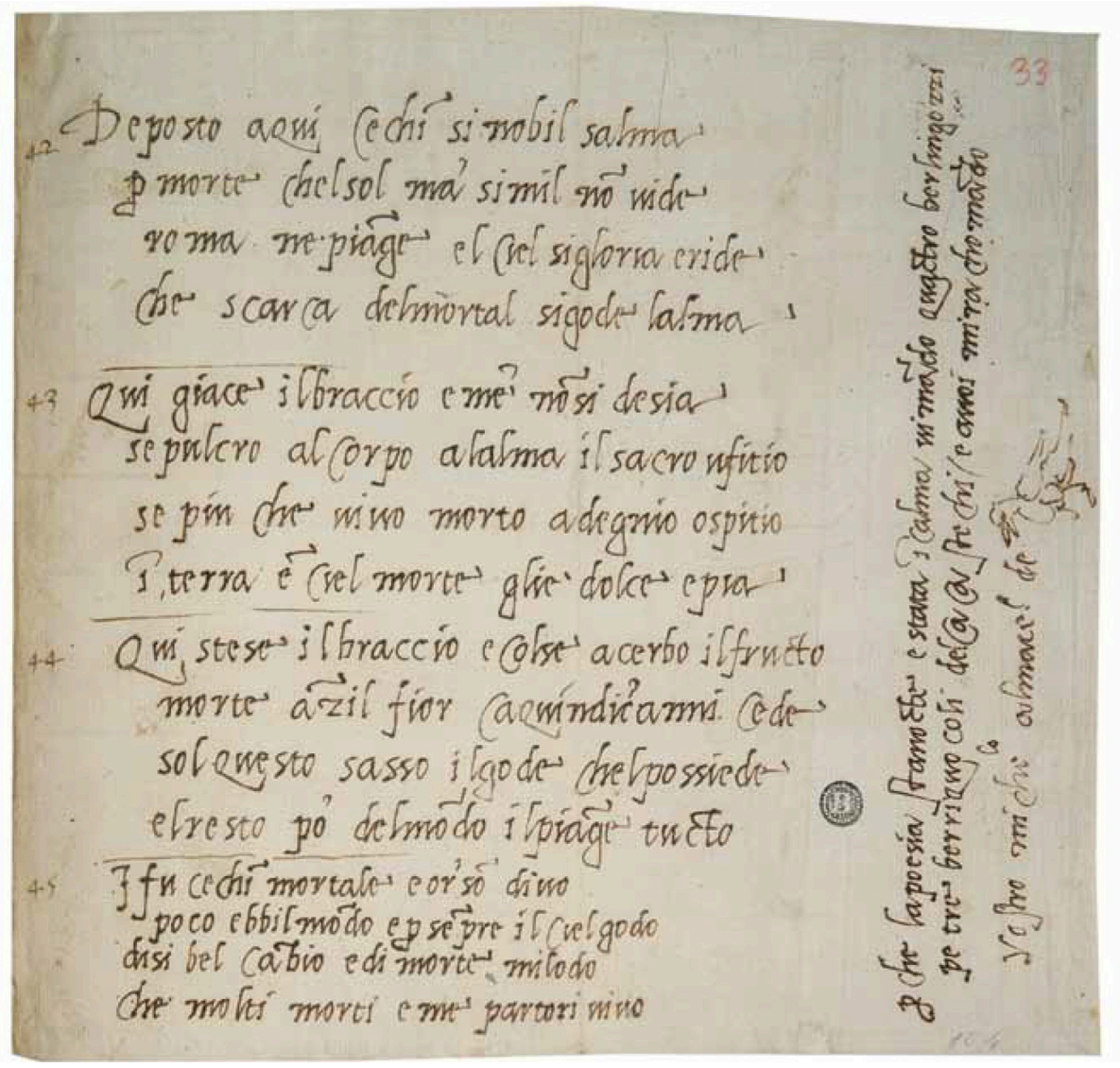
At some point in 1522 or 1523, Michelangelo writes a handsomely penned letter to his friend Giovan Francesco Fattucci (Figure 3-8).[11] Perhaps because the subject is so banal—a wry complaint about the tailor that Fattucci had procured for him—he introduces a few hints of facetiousness, and even mystery, including a curious, slightly Greek-looking cipher signifying *carissimo* and, in the closing, a numerological formula ("12459") that remains unexplained to this day. He goes a step further with the signature. The letter closes "Vostro fedelissimo schultore in Via Moza, presso al Canto alla . . ." ("Your most faithful sculptor in Via Moza near the Canto of . . ."), and then, instead of completing the address, he draws a broad, round mill wheel defined in its perspectival position by the foreshortened square axle hole at its center (Figure 3-9). About twenty years later, now in Rome, Michelangelo is regularly sending epitaphs he has written in honor of Cecchino Bracci to the recently deceased boy's uncle, Luigi del Riccio, and, just as regularly, attaching self-effacing comments about the quality of his own poetry.[12] Concluding one of these (Figure 3-10), which he has written filling up the marginal space at right angles to the poems themselves, he signs off, "Vostro Michelagniolo al Macel de . . ." and then (Figure 3-11), in a format much larger than the lettering, he produces a rather intricate sketch of a crow with its beak open and pointing directly toward the preceding *de*.



3-9. Detail of Figure 3-8

With five hundred or so letters preserved and only two instances of this particular *jeu d'esprit*, we can hardly argue that Michelangelo had the habit of signifying his address pictorially. Still, it is worth observing him as he engages in this bit of play involving an alternative way of conveying

macina and *corvi*, because in some sense it gives us a glimpse of the artist at the most elementary meeting point of word and image, where the two exist in parallel because they are interchangeable. According to the rules of the rebus, the picture is the perfect substitute and equivalent of the word. In this transaction, the image is constrained into a purely signifying function and detached from any representational context. The mill wheel is not part of a mill, the bird is not located in a physical environment; the objects are transferred on to a page of text, where it is absurd to think in terms of perspective or point of view, since writing, while it may be as much a visual object as drawing, does not really exist in representational space. On the other hand, it is perhaps no coincidence that the mill wheel, located at the bottom of the sheet, is drawn as though we were seeing it slightly from above, nor that the crow is part of a game whereby the page must be rotated from its principal orientation in order to be deciphered.

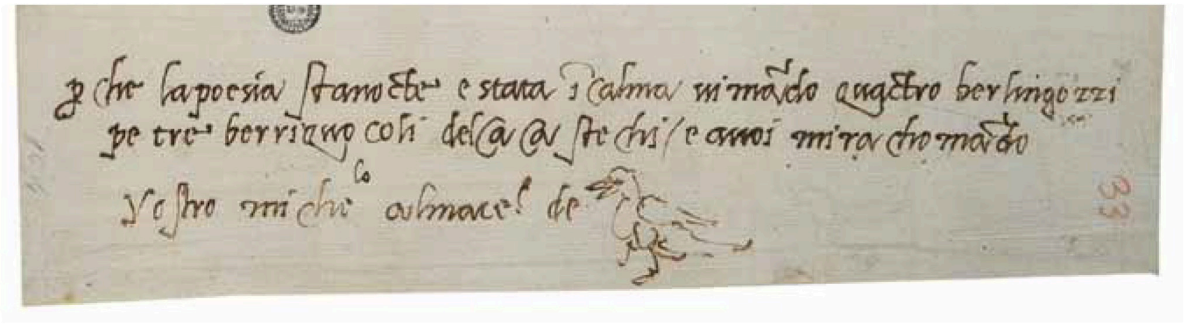


3-10. Michelangelo, poems and letter to Luigi del Riccio, *Corpus* 367r. Archivio Buonarroti XIII fol. 33. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

But decipherment is part of a multi-layered gag here. To employ the pictogram, certainly in Michelangelo's milieu, is to summon up a whole world of secret knowledge and its representation via arcane images—à la Egypt and the spurious sage Horapollo—which, in this playful form, establishes a special bond between the writer and the recipient.[13] In one sense, the joke on the

mystagogues is that the decoding of the wheel and the bird is laughably obvious, as it must be if one is to understand the picture as a frictionless surrogate for the word. But in another sense the verbal meaning is obvious only to those who already know Michelangelo's address. After all, he does not use a pictogram on the outside of the letter, lest (presumably) it be delivered to the Canto of the Doughnut or the Market of the Raven; indeed, placing the address, whether in words or pictures, on the inside is completely optional, and Michelangelo exercises this option in only an infinitesimal number of cases throughout the large volume of his surviving correspondence.[14]

In this game of equivalence and non-equivalence, when Michelangelo draws a picture in place of writing a word, there is more at stake than the solution to a puzzle. His choices, as it turns out, are dictated not only by the happenstance of the street where he lives. The letter with the *macina* subscript has turned at its close from the bantering matter of the troublesome tailor to some darker implications about the writer's state of mind: "a ore venti tre, e ognuna mi pare un anno" ("at the twenty-third hour, each of which seems to me a year"), which is then followed by the enigma (this one truly opaque) of "12459." Within that context, the mill wheel, beyond being an address, places the writer *alle macine*, i.e., in a state of struggle. Similarly, for a note in which Michelangelo laments his ineptitude as a poet, the inanely chattering crow seems to be doing some decidedly extra-postal duty. By substituting pictures for words in the middle of verbal discourse, Michelangelo is crossing the line from the word to the thing, reanimating these place names from their historical oblivion, turning dead metaphor into lively visual representation, and identifying himself and his state of mind with his calling as a draftsman.

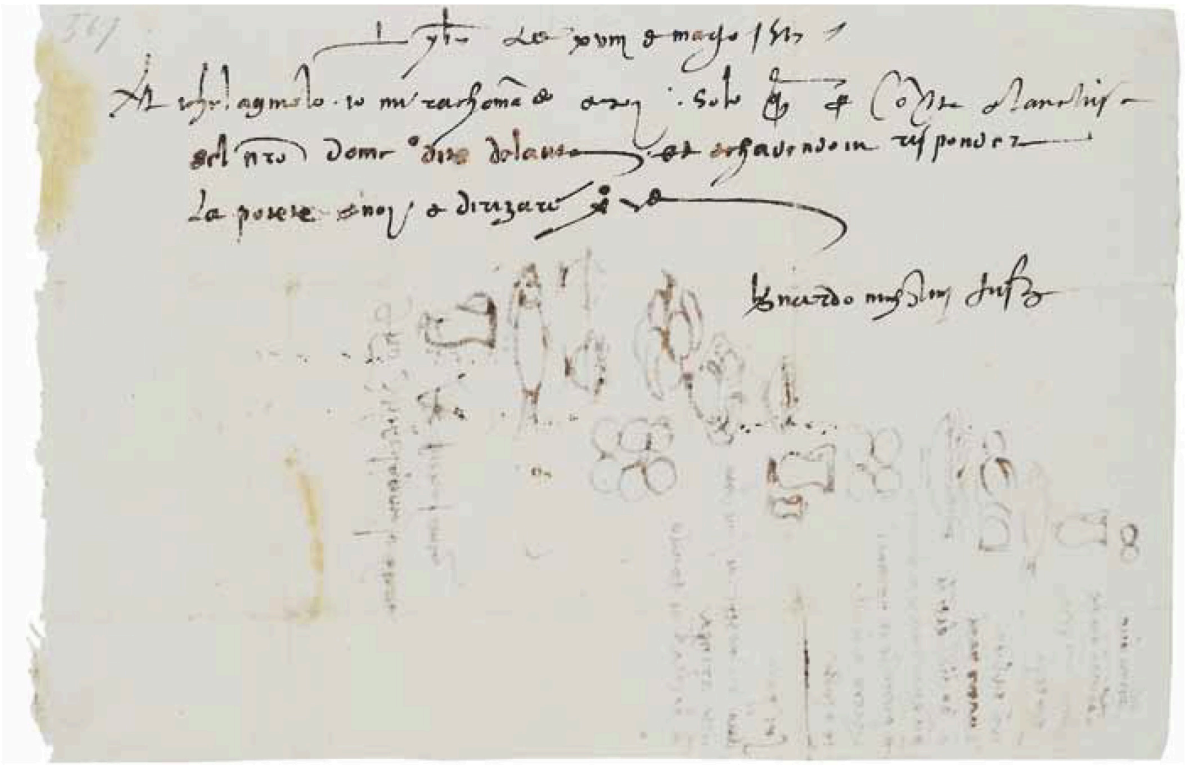


3-11. Detail of Figure 3-10

None of this would quite work the same way if Michelangelo had not withheld the word for which the picture stands. It is the presence of a single image at the truncated endpoint of a page-long text that demands the viewer's participation in this unsettling manner. All of which suggests that even though there may be a simple semantic equivalence between *crow* and a picture of a crow, there is nothing so simple about the process of substitution. What sort of mechanisms of equivalence and dis-equivalence come into play, however, when Michelangelo supplies *both* word and picture? In one sense, that describes all the sheets of paper considered in this study, though in the vast majority of cases, it is precisely the *in*congruence of the two modes that concerns us. In a couple of remarkable instances, however, text and image are placed side-by-side, without all the distancing problematics of the Sistine name tags but—apparently, at least—in parallel.

In March of 1518, Michelangelo receives a brief note from Bernardo Niccolini which says nothing more than that he is forwarding letters from Domenico Buoninsegni and commending them to Michelangelo's attention (Figure 3-12). The matter is not so innocent, however, once it is put back into the considerable context of its paper trail. Both of these correspondents are treasury men, Niccolini in the service of the Archbishop of Florence, Buoninsegni in the service of Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, and their various machinations will cause trouble for Michelangelo throughout the long history of his two most maddening undertakings, the Julius Tomb and the façade of San Lorenzo. At the point when this note is sent, Michelangelo has just transferred himself from

Carrara to Pietrasanta—that is, from one marble-quarrying site to another—under the cardinal's orders, reinforced by threatening references involving Buoninsegni. Within a short time, Michelangelo writes back to Niccolini to say that he has not received the supposedly enclosed letters, and he sends another letter early in 1519 to complain bitterly about the gossip network, both oral and written, in which his two interlocutors have ensnared him.[15] All of which is to say that Niccolini's letter, the sheet of paper on which, sometime during these years, he composes one of his most intriguing drawings, may in itself represent something of a provocation.



3-12. Letter from Bernardo Niccolini, *Corpus* 117r. Archivio Buonarroti X 578. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

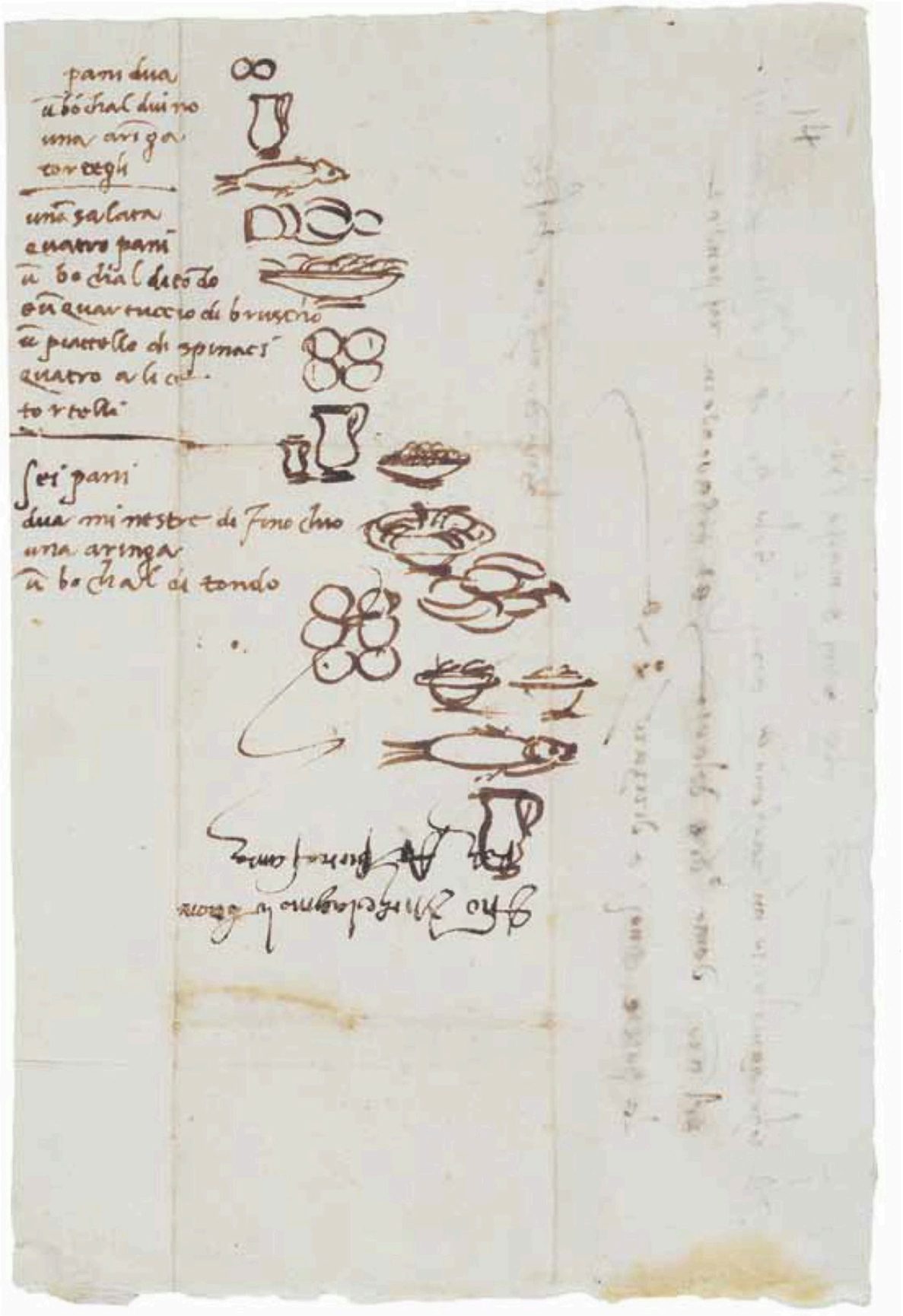
Michelangelo does not touch the recto, where Niccolini's message is located. He attacks the verso (Figure 3-13), which so far contains only an address*, D*[omi]*no Michelagniolo Buonaroti A Pietra Santa*, appearing about one third of the way down on the middle fold of the sheet. He opens the page flat, turns it upside down, and writes. There is no knowing for what utilitarian purpose, if any, he composed the list of fifteen food items, divided unevenly into three groups, at the left hand margin of the page:

pani dua	two breads
un bochal di vino	a pitcher of wine
una aringa	a herring
tortegli	filled pastas
_____	_____
una insalata	a salad
quatro pani	four breads
un bochal di tondo	a pitcher of sweet wine
e un quartuccio di brusco	and a quarter of dry wine
un piatello di spinaci	a little plate of spinach
quatro alice	four anchovies

tortelli	filled pastas
_____	_____
sei pani	six breads
dua minestre di finochio	two fennel soups
una aringa	a herring
un bochal di tondo	a pitcher of sweet wine

The earnest scholarship on the subject has focused on such matters as Michelangelo's scrupulous inventorying, on his management of a group of hungry assistants, on his frugality regarding life's ordinary necessities.[16] But these three menus, spare and elliptical, hardly seem to resemble any serious form of record-keeping, of which, after all, we possess many examples.

To begin with, the history of the sheet may point to a stance here that is more droll than documentary. The note from Niccolini is something between a throwaway and an ominous official summons, and, for all that it says nothing, it presents itself in grandiose penmanship. Indeed, the calligraphic flourishes of the mailing address (the part of the document where such adornments would seem superfluous) might only serve to remind the recipient that he was "Michelangelo in Pietrasanta" somewhat against his will. And so, the transit from royal summons to shopping list, from a princely sphere of excess to a *bottega* domain of bare necessities, might well seem an appropriate response when no directly answering letter can be written.



3-13. Michelangelo, list of foods with sketches, *Corpus* 117v. Archivio Buonarroti X578. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

But it is the accompanying drawings that remove the sheet definitively from any poker-faced purpose. The joke, it seems to me, is precisely around the question of an equivalence between words and pictures. The elaborated final "a" of *Pietrasanta* has already tipped the scale from text to picture; the list of foods, presumably completed before any drawing was begun, already places language in the realm of direct signification with none of the syntactical connectives—verbs, prepositional phrases—that make words difficult to translate into pictures. It is like the catalogue of Christ's ancestors, except that where it was impossible to picture "Roboam," it is all too easy to picture "anchovy." Faced with such quotidian nouns, the viewer is set up to expect perfect *ut pictura poesis*, as though this sheet could actually serve as a Rosetta Stone that would enable an analphabetic gofer to buy groceries.

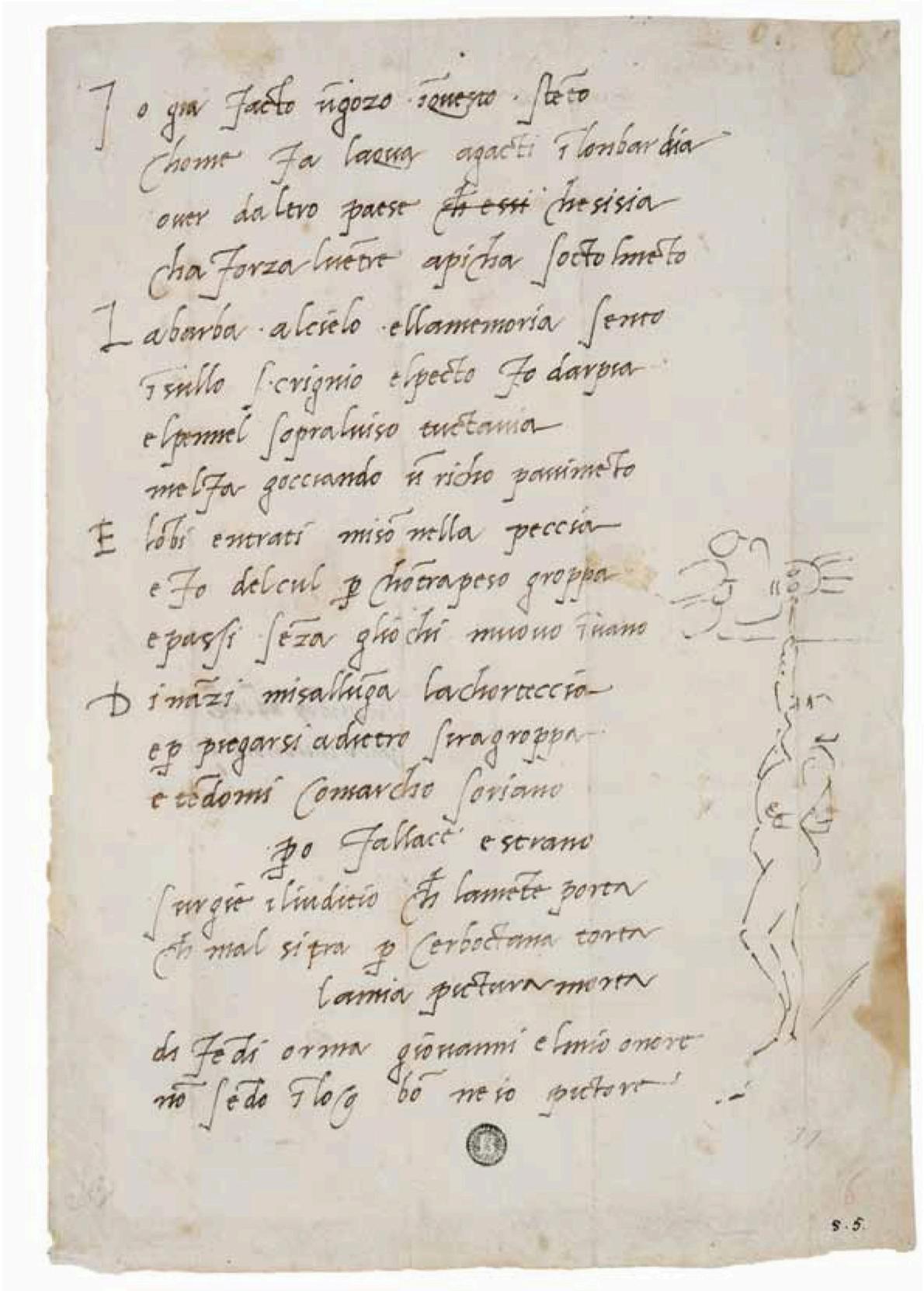
These expectations are, however, dashed. Perhaps the drawings take their cue from the magnification in the list itself: the menus expand from two to four to six breads, and the drawings respond by the increasing size of each individual loaf. The herring and the tortelli also enlarge. About halfway down the page, some objects, like the pitchers and the tureens, start developing shadows, while others, like the bowl of anchovies and the second batch of tortelli, reveal more attention to perspectival viewpoint: in either case, the drawing is beginning to locate the objects in space in just the way that the word itself cannot. And, of course, the sheer magnitude and volume of the images achieve a sort of spatial acceleration, such that, while the pictures of the first meal have almost kept true to the space of the words, by the final meal the images do not even begin until the words have concluded. At the same time, the pictures develop their own mutating spatial syntax: at first they imitate the list, but by the end they develop breadth, though not sufficiently to keep in horizontal parity with their verbal equivalents.

The whole sequence concludes when the final image (the third and largest wine jug, executed with particularly heavy strokes) has superimposed itself on the pre-existing piece of writing. In one sense, this collision may signal the ultimate gesture of contempt by the artist in the face of his paper-pushing correspondent. Still, whether the artist knows it or not, the drawing hardly signals an unqualified triumph of the visual over the verbal. Granted that the pictures appear to leave the words behind, laying bare all their linguistic and gastronomic poverty. But at the same time they reveal their own inadequacy in respect to the words: how could even Michelangelo's penstrokes communicate the different vinous qualities of *brusco* and *tondo*, or represent the fact that the soup is flavored with fennel? It is no accident—looking back on the entire discourse of words and pictures—that the subject here should be food, since the experience of taste (like that of music) often stands as a goal beyond the reach of either *pictura* or *poesis*, at a site where the body possesses its own untranslatable discourse.[17]

And the body is the central point at issue in Michelangelo's other famous drawing where picture and word exist in purposeful parallel, the poem-cum-sketch of the artist painting the Sistine Ceiling (Figure 3-14), executed earlier than the menus but perhaps involving a more complex set of equivalences.[18] The most obvious difference between these works may in the end be the most important. On the sheet of menus, the words were prosaic acts of signification, without any syntactical or figurative life beyond primary denotation; and they were, appropriately, crowded into unimportance by the visual representations that began as mere illustrations of them but ended up overwhelming the bits of text out of which they were born. The Sistine sheet, on the other hand, contains Michelangelo's first major piece of poetic expression. Indeed, when one considers the bulk of his (often fragmentary) verse efforts prior to the period in his middle years when he began to move in literary and humanistic circles, it is quite astonishing that he produced something this masterful as early as 1512—and, appropriately, the words earn pride of place on the sheet, relegating the picture to a marginality that is both literal and figurative.

If we then turn to the words as the prime mover on this page, we discover that perhaps more than any other of the nearly three hundred poems that follow it in all the modern editions, this poem is in a fundamental sense visual—indeed, almost ekphrastic. It is often asserted, in regard

to Michelangelo's greatest sculptural works, that he manages to convey the interiority of the human condition by the manner in which he depicts the bodily exterior.[19] In the majority of his poems, however, that inward emotional state is heavily (one might sometimes say ponderously) foregrounded, whereas, apart from formulaically repeated references to the physical signs of age and frailty, the body is not a principal subject of representation. In this respect, however, the Sistine poem is really much more like one of his pictorial works:



3-14. *(facing)* Michelangelo, poem and sketch, *Corpus* 174r. Archivio Buonarroti XIII 111. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

I’ ho già fatto un gozzo in questo stento,

come fa l'acqua a' gatti in Lombardia
over d'altro paese che si sia,
c'a forza 'l ventre appicca sotto 'l mento.
La barba al cielo, e la memoria sento
in sullo scrigno, e 'l petto fo d'arpia,
e 'l pennel sopra 'l viso tuttavia
mel fa, gocciando, un ricco pavimento.
E' lombi entrati mi son nella peccia,
e fo del cul per contrapeso groppa,
e' passi senza gli occhi muovo invano.
Dinanzi mi s'allunga la corteccia,
e per piegarsi adietro si ragroppa,
e tendomi com'arco sorïano.

In this difficult position I've given myself a goiter—as does the water to the peasants of Lombardy, or anyway of some country or another—for it shoves my stomach up to hang beneath my chin.

My beard points to heaven, and I feel the nape of my neck on my hump; I bend my breast like a harpy's, and, with its nonstop dripping from above, my brush makes my face a richly decorated floor.

My loins have gone up into my belly, and I make my backside into a croup as a counterweight; and I cannot see where to put my feet.

In front my hide is stretched, and behind the curve makes it wrinkled, as I bend myself like a Syrian bow. [20]

The material changes in the "caudal" tercets that will stretch the traditional sonnet form here, but for the requisite first fourteen lines the poet limits himself rigorously to a description of the body. Whatever one wants to know about the speaker's inward condition must be inferred from a reading of the visual signs.

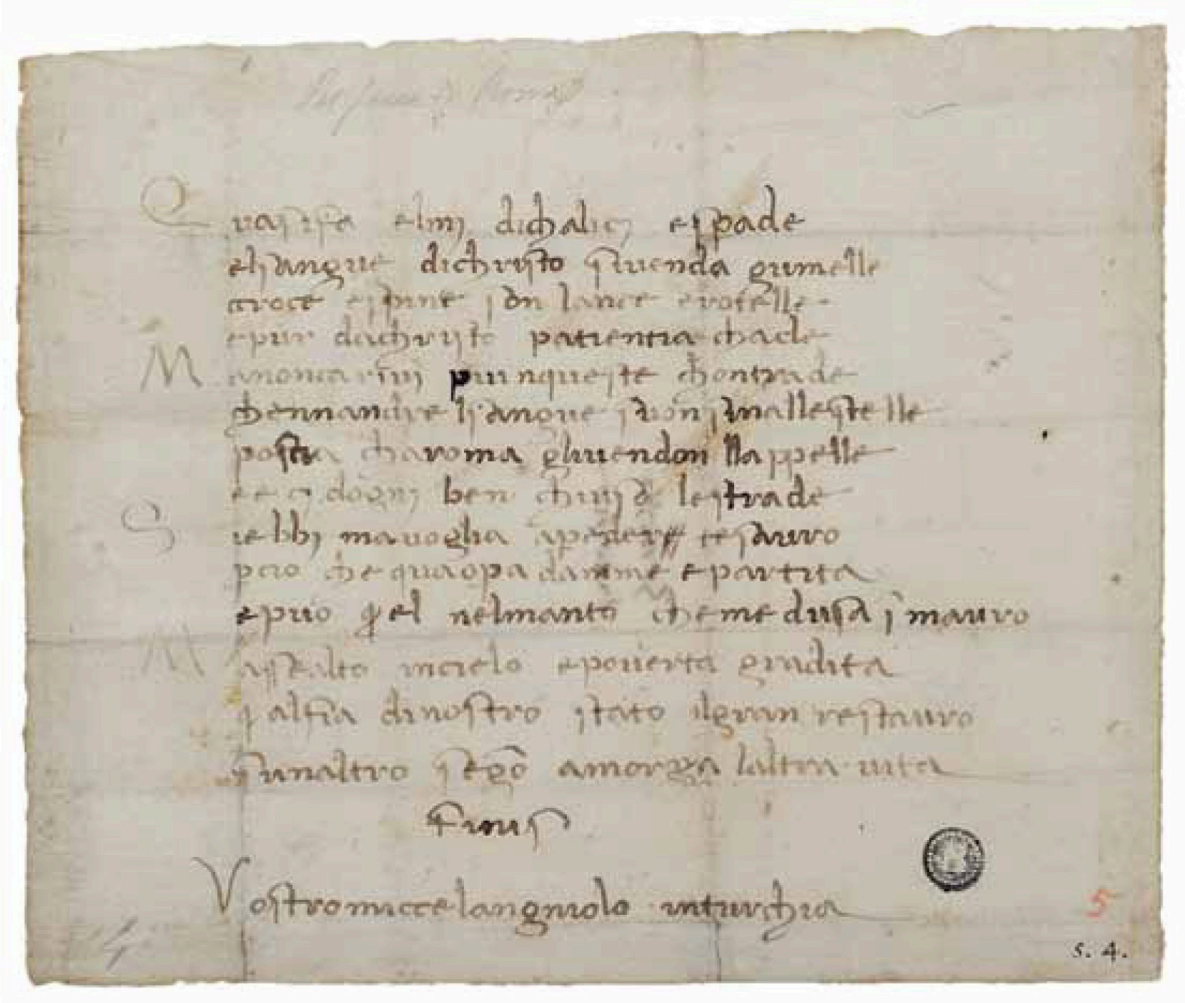
If this reading is fairly easy to do—if, in other words, the tortured condition of the poet's anatomy leaves little doubt that he is psychically or spiritually *in extremis*—that is because the poem has behind it a vibrant literary tradition in which body and soul meet in just such a set of painful entanglements. The tortured corporeal transformations of Dante's damned, clearly alluded to here, owe their own origins in part to the apt and frequently moralized fates of the characters in Ovid. Indeed, both the *Metamorphoses* and the *Inferno* flourished as "visual" poems, at once appealing to the reader's eye and inspiring many literal illustrations.[21] And the ruling conceit in both cases, not coincidentally, was that the exterior distortion of the human body was metaphorically appropriate to the interior condition that had, by one system of equity or another, merited such change. In effect, once this trope had passed into the realm of canonical Christian theology, the artist who could envisage this act of poetic justice became a sort of visual god. *Contrappasso* meets *contrapposto*, which in this poem's particular case of torment is expressed as *contrapeso*.

But Michelangelo is going a step further here, into territory that Ovid may have implied in his final lines but that Dante did not wish to enter; that is, he is himself becoming the metamorphosed work of art. It is not just that these fourteen lines omit any sense of what the fresco actually looks like—in that respect, it is the opposite of ekphrasis—but that the visual and verbal gymnastics of the scene that the poet describes manage to crowd out any sense that there could be something else to look at. We are not allowed to see beyond the person of the artist: even when the paint drips off his brush, it is his face and not the floor of the chapel that receives

the pigment. If, in other words, Michelangelo's *pittura* is *morta*, as he will go on to say, it is partly because he has killed it.

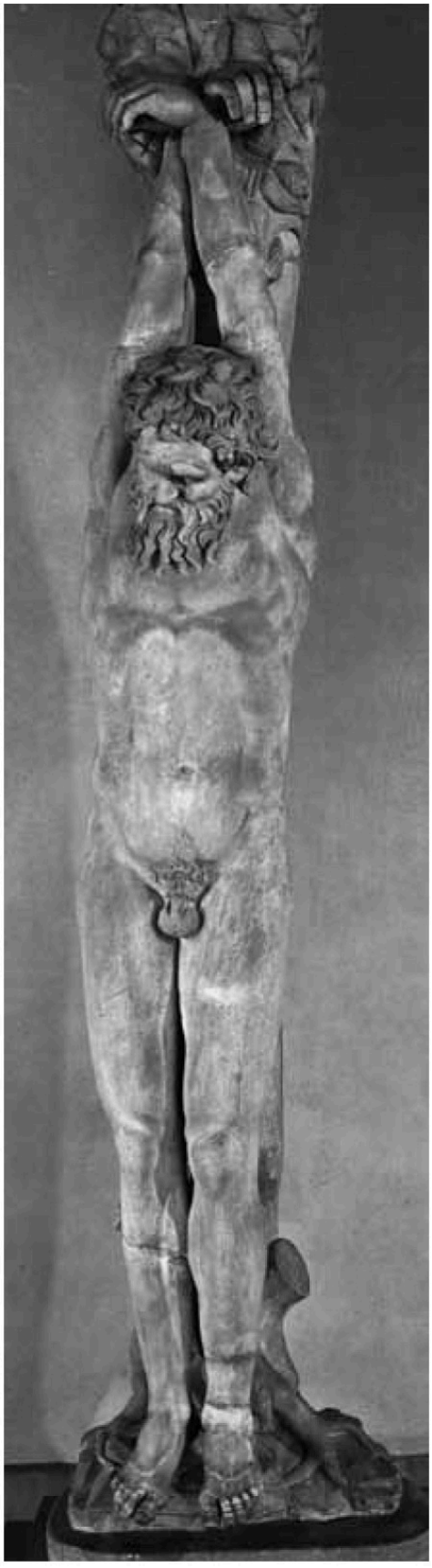
The supernumerary final lines, graphically separated in Michelangelo's design, introduce not only another register of self-doubt— "Però fallace e strano | surge il iudizio che la mente porta" ("however, the thoughts that arise in my mind are false and strange")—but also an addressee, and that in turn redefines the nature of the whole composite art object. The Giovanni whom the speaker asks to defend "la mia pittura morta" may well be Giovanni di Benedetto da Pistoia (the verso includes the inscription "A Giovanni, a quel propio [sic] da Pistoia"). They shared a stormy and impassioned friendship involving an exchange of poems, including, much later, another caudal sonnet by Michelangelo, this time of considerable rage against his friend and with an explicitly Dantean field of reference.[22] If these Giovannis are one and the same, then Michelangelo was already forming humanist-style friendships, with all their aesthetic, intellectual, and erotic dimensions, by 1512.

Whatever the precise affective context for this sheet may have been, it clearly stages itself as a formal verse letter, in a tradition that goes back to Petrarch on the serious side and to Berni and Burchiello on the comic side. And as such, its physical form is part of the communication. The handwriting of the verses itself is highly polished (though there is one cancellation in the third line), with formal capital letters to introduce each stanza of the sonnet and, as already noted, a careful distinction made between the first fourteen and the last six verses. It is perhaps useful to compare this sheet with that containing another (probably early) verse letter, whose recipient may also have been Giovanni da Pistoia (Figure 3-15). Here, too, the mode is invective—against the papacy rather than against his own work on behalf of the papacy. And here, too, the calligraphy is elaborately perfected, possibly even designed in a whimsical, orientalizing form to correspond with the rambunctious tone and with the deliberately antic signature, "Vostro miccelangnolo in turchia" ("Your Michelangelo in Turkey"). If both of these works belong in the period of the Sistine Ceiling, we may conclude that one of the impulses that started Michelangelo on the road to becoming a practicing poet was the notion that his words could communicate visually almost as though they were pictures.



3-15. Michelangelo, letter to Giovanni da Pistoia. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

3-16. Detail of Figure 3-14



3-17. Ancient sculpture, *Marsyas*. Uffizi, Florence

The Sistine sheet, of course, actually includes a picture, and the most striking thing about it is that it is hardly in polished form at all (Figure 3-16). In all sorts of ways, the drawing does not correspond to the scene described in the poem, or, for that matter, to the actual scene of Michelangelo frescoing the ceiling. (While it is probably true, as Vasari and Condivi assert, that he executed the painting standing up rather than, as Paolo Giovio and Hollywood have supposed, lying on his back, I am not at all sure that this image should be used as evidence.[23]) Back in 1928, Charles deTolnay quite brilliantly deduced from these discrepancies a whole typology of Renaissance image-making. According to his division, there was the "graphic paraphrase of the text," which he called "illustration," then the "rendering of things in the place of abstract concepts," which he called *Bilderschrift*, or picture-writing, and finally, at the highest level, the operation he perceived in this drawing, which he described as "the independent re-thinking of the perceptual actualities of the sensible world itself . . . [so that] pictorial and conceptual are comprehended together."[24]

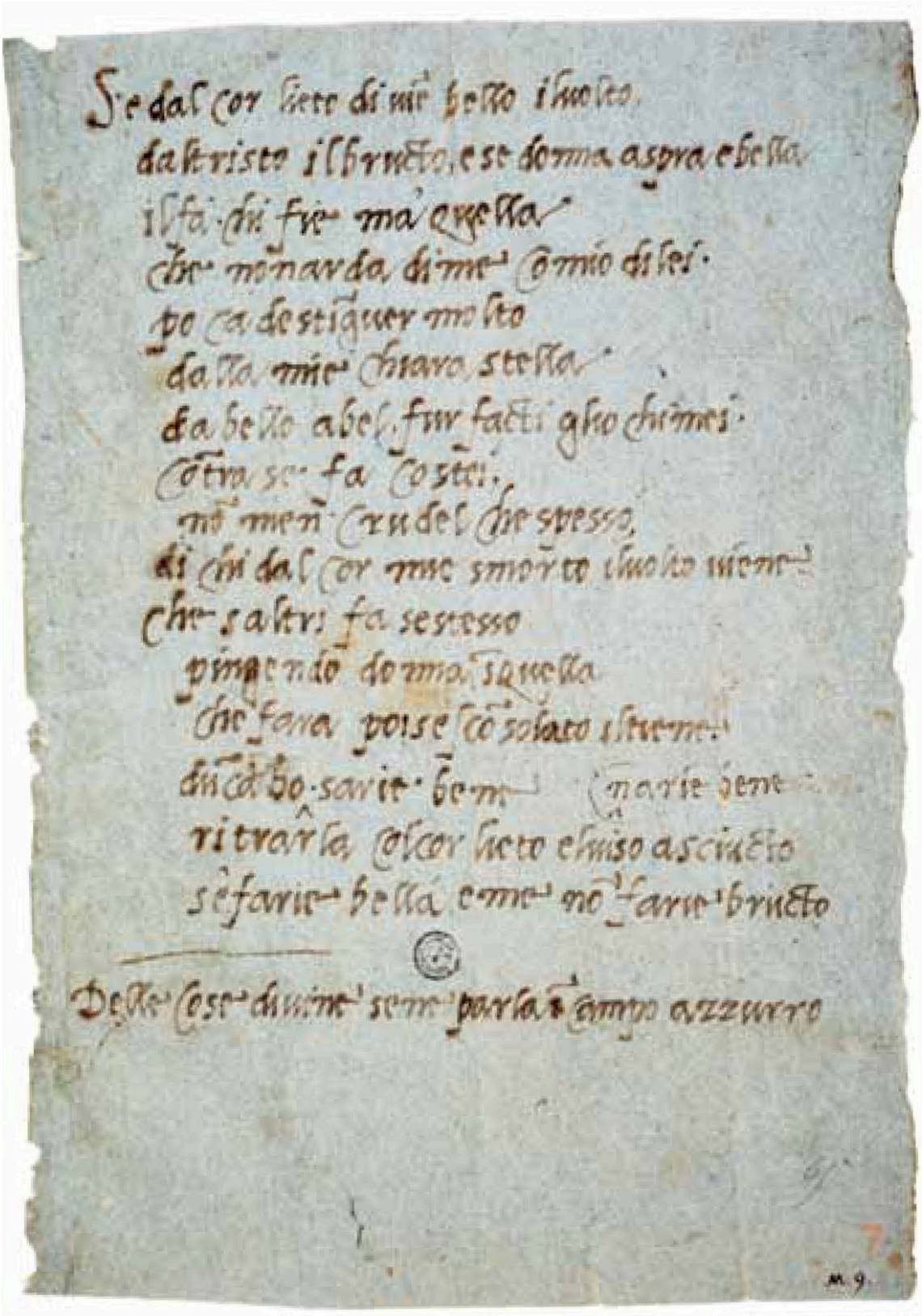
How such magic is performed may require a bit of close reading. First of all, there is an implied promise here that the picture will fit perfectly into the signifying structures of the text (and even its physical structures, as there is some correspondence between the painter's body and the line lengths of the nearby verses). But what would be a fairly straightforward distortion of this relationship on the menu sheet is here much more complicated. The text is visually elegant, the image rudimentary: already there is an in-joke on the status of the author/draftsman, since he is (even in 1512) notably accomplished as an artist but not so experienced as a writer. At the next layer of the joke, there is the content of the poem itself, which is precisely bewailing his failure as a visual artist. But—to give it another quarter turn—the "artist" as represented in this image hardly seems a visual icon for inadequacy. While it is possible to read some of the poem's sorry corporeal description into these few sketched contours, I find much more to admire in this figure's primary physical indicators: he is nude, he is muscular, and he appears to balance himself exquisitely on the teeter-totter of the angled scaffolding. He is acting as a painter, but he looks more like a sculpture. In fact, he is designed as a profile version of the *Marsyas* (Figure 3-17) that was one of the gems of the Medici collection, a work closely associated by Vasari with the creative careers of Donatello and Verrocchio, Michelangelo's self-acknowledged forebearers as sculptors.[25] No surprise that this sketch should transform the upraised posture of the unfortunate figure who is about to be flayed into the artist's own agonized position as the painter on the scaffold. From "mi s'allunga la corteccia" to the painter-as-Marsyas to the self-portrait on the skin of the *Last Judgment*'s St. Bartholomew twenty-five years later (Figure 3-18) is only a small step.[26]

3-18. Michelangelo, detail from *Last Judgment*, St. Bartholomew. Sistine Chapel, Vatican Palace, Vatican State

3-19. Michelangelo, the prophet Joel. Sistine Chapel, Vatican Palace, Vatican State

3-20. Michelangelo, the prophet Daniel. Sistine Chapel, Vatican Palace, Vatican State

Just when we have absorbed the paradox of the painter as heroic Ovidian sufferer, of course, we look upward at the "fresco" that this hunky classical paragon is producing, and it is then that we perhaps at last find some sort of straightforward congruence with the gloomy view expressed in the text. The poem, as I suggested before, has obliterated any sense of the object being painted; when that absence is compensated for by an image that might be an antic version of one of the more wild-haired prophets, say Joel or Daniel (Figures 3-19, 3-20), or might just be a classical statue with truncated legs, arm, and genitals, all as imagined by a four-year-old child, the experience of being present in the Chapel as Michelangelo struggles to fulfill his vast commission, becomes completely obscured.


Se dal cor lieto di mie bello i'mosto,
dal triste i'brieto, e se donna aspra e bella
i'sfai di fie ma' quella
che' mo'narda di me' o mio di lei.
po ca de stiguer molto
dalla mie chiara stella
da bello a bel, fui fatti glio chi mei.
Co'tra se' fa Co'sti,
no' men crudel che stesso,
di chi dal cor mie smo'rto i'mosto viene
che' altri fa se stesso
pingendo donna quella
che' fora poi se co'solato i'sterne
di cio' bo. sarie bem (marie dene
ritrarla, co' cor lieto e miso asciutto
se' farie' bella come no' farie' brieto
Delle cose divine semo parlato campo azzurro
m 9.

3-21. Michelangelo, text of "Se dal cor lieto." Archivio Buonarroti XIII 46. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

Apropos of all this cancellation, we should not forget that this is a letter and that it has a very particular goal: "La mia pittura morta | difendi orma', Giovanni, e 'l mio onore." ("Defend my dead

painting from now on, Giovanni, and my honour.") The addressee is far-off in Tuscany ("A Giovanni, a quel propio di Pistoia"), he cannot see either the painful work or the resulting fresco, but something in this communication is supposed to turn him into an advocate—but for what? The answer, I think, comes in the hierarchies of artistic creation that this sheet traverses. The poem evacuated the fresco and turned its maker into a tortured, metamorphic work of art. The visual aspect of the sheet, with its downward spiral of quality from calligraphy, to the image of the painter, to the image of the painting, in itself conveys the process of erasure. The final line of the poem— "I am no painter"—points directly to a drawing, such as it is, of the speaker as a painter but also as a heroic figure, who is, however, heroic for something other than the thing he is currently painting. To say in words that he is no painter and to place those words next to a picture, however bizarre, in which he *is* a painter, is to play on all the paradoxes of seeing-is-believing, insofar as they are filtered through the representational arts, which exist on a long continuum between godlike creativity and the physical mess of the material workplace.[27] Given all of Michelangelo's struggles at this point in his life (and not only those alluded to in these verses), I think what turns him into a painting-denying poet and what he hopes for from his humanisticallyinclined friend is reassurance that his talent places him in some heroic category of *artist* that is quite independent of any particular medium—especially, his current work for hire, fresco-painting.[28]

To find on this sheet such an ambitious act of self-presentation is to enter upon a paradox that is in some ways characteristic of all the accounts I have given of these drawings: in effect, I am locating some very serious issues in a context where the artist is clearly making a joke. Jokes are, of course, like that; but, grave as their import may be, we must not forget that they are jokes. The substitution of a mill wheel or a crow for an address, the deliberate assumption of an infantile painting style: these are acts of parody directed at the very business of visual and verbal semiotics. Indeed, the fact that every time Michelangelo puts picture and word together in the mode of equation he descends into a sort of burlesque register may, in the end, give us the fullest sense of the way he relates, or refuses to relate, image and text. Let one final sheet of paper (Figure 3-21), from much later in the artist's career, signal his assumptions about any too straightforward parallelisms across these boundaries.

The sheet contains the unique autograph text of a poem in which Michelangelo develops one of his most complexly articulated sets of conceits:

Se dal cor lieto divien bello il volto,
dal tristo il brutto; e se donna aspra e bella
il fa, chi fie ma' quella
che non arda di me com'io di lei?
Po' c'a destinguer molto
dalla mie chiara stella
da bello a bel fur fatti gli occhi mei,
contr'a sé fa costei
non men crudel che spesso
dichi: —Dal cor mie smorto il volto viene.—
Che s'altri fa se stesso,
pingendo donna, in quella
che farà poi, se sconsolato il tiene?
Dunc'ambo n'arien bene,
ritrarla col cor lieto e 'l viso asciutto:
sé farie bella e me non farie brutto.

> If one's face becomes beautiful from having a happy heart, and ugly from a sad one; and if it is made to be the latter by a harsh and beautiful woman, what woman is there who would not burn for me as I for her? Since through the influence of my bright star my eyes were so formed as to be able to distinguish clearly one beauty from another, she acts no less cruelly towards herself in often making me say: "My downcast face comes from my heart" [or possibly "the state of my heart makes your face lifeless"]. For if an artist represents himself in painting a woman, what will he represent in painting her, if she keeps him disconsolate? So it would be for both our good if while portraying her I could have a happy heart and a dry face: she would then make herself beautiful and not make me ugly.[29]

Platonic identification of the good with the beautiful here meets an exchange between the lover and the beloved, which in turn is crossed with the Petrarchan appeal for an end to the lady's cruelty, climaxed by the idea that *ogni dipintore dipinge sè*[30]—and all this happens under the astrological aegis of "mie chiara stella," which has labored in particular to form the poet's *eyes*.

There is no drawing on the page, but there is an unusual visual effect: the paper has been dyed blue. Now, in Michelangelo's practice as a drafttsman he very occasionally uses colored paper, though less frequently than artists of the previous generation and always having done the dye job himself.[31] On the other hand, so far as I am aware, there is no other instance of a poem on colored paper. Whether the color on this sheet was the result of elaborate effort by the artist himself or whether he chose the sheet, exceptionally, because it had been colored by others or for other purposes, we cannot say. But after the final verse of the poem he draws a line about a third of the way across the page and writes, "Delle cose divine se ne parla in campo azzurro" ("one speaks of divine things on a sky-blue field").

Again, it is a joke, but not a joke. That the color of the paper should be somehow or other parallel to the signifying system of the poem is in its own way as simple-minded as the relation between a mill wheel and an address or between a sonnet about painting the Sistine ceiling and the sketch in its margins. More absurd, really, since dyeing paper scarcely seems like an artistic act at all. On the face of it, the blue paper, along with the postscript containing a seemingly facetious interpretation of it, transforms the object into some sort of presentation piece, which is in line with the relatively careful calligraphy (though, precisely as in the case of the Sistine sonnet, this writing contains one correction/ addendum). So if the object itself is being presented to the "donna aspra e bella," who is in the third person in the text but now almost a second person in the implied gift transaction, then the visual presentation seems like some sort of clumsy compliment to her: the poet has gone to the trouble of finding or making special paper, and he has declared her—via the visual medium, though manifestly *not* in the words of the poem—to be divine.

In truth, though, this transaction is a fiction, and the equivalences between the visual effect and the *cose divine* are more complexly inserted into the metaphorics of the poem itself. The equation of blue paper and divine things is a joke because the poem has already complicated to a mind-bending degree any equivalences between the outward appearance of things and their inner nature. A happy heart would make the speaker beautiful, except that, with or without a happy heart, this speaker is notoriously ugly (as witness the text of the Sistine sonnet). The lady's beauty, once it has been combined with harshness, turns to ugliness. The deprivations suffered by the speaker render either his or her face (or both of them) *smorto*.[32] With the next turn in the poem, we come to understand that the paradox-producing system of contagion here is not simply a conventional set of Petrarchan sympathies, whereby happiness and misery, beauty and ugliness ricochet between the couple on the wings of eros; we are dealing rather with the professional act of portraiture. If the speaker is a painter, and not only a paper-dyer, then a very deliberate kind of

agency is introduced into the Platonic economies of the good and the beautiful. In effect, he has his own way of avenging himself upon her—unless, that is, he is helpless to paint anything but his own miserable internal condition.

But it has already been asserted that he is not just a painter, in the sense of someone who might choose to flatter or insult his subject or might be constrained by the principle of "every painter paints himself " to render her as his own self-portrait. Michelangelo is here once again seeking to define "artist" beyond the limits of a medium. He is saying, in other words, that he is not just a painter, but rather a painter in the loftiest sense of the term: one whose eyes were made by the heavens to discriminate between the different modalities of beauty. It is this gift from the stars, and not the physical charms of the lady, themselves deconstructed into near meaninglessness by the poem, that we should identify with the *cose divine* of the postscript. In effect, the whole fable of the *donna crudele* who may be appeased by the arguments of love poems or by a colorful gift moralized in the form of a compliment reveals itself as the pretext for a far more complicated set of equivalences between subject and object, or between *being* beautiful, *seeming* beautiful, and *seeing* beautiful. And the blue paper, with its too easy concord between the words one uses and the colors in which one paints, is left as a relic of a sign system that fails to give account of the differences that distinguish one beauty from another.

4
MAKING A NAME

We have not quite finished with picture puzzles. There has already been occasion to mention that shortly after Michelangelo's death his body was transported from Rome to Florence; there it became the centerpiece for a vast ceremony staged by those humanists and artists in the orbit of Cosimo de' Medici who had recently founded the Florentine Academy and were eager to exploit the occasion. The recently deceased divine artist might function, they hoped, as a sort of patron saint for their enterprise. We possess detailed textual evidence for these events of July 1564, owing both to a contemporary volume entitled *Esequie del divino Michelagnolo Buonarroti* and to the account Vasari gives in the second edition of his *Lives*, published four years later. The two versions differ very little; indeed, their wording is often identical. And, though the dedication of the *Esequie* bears the signature "Jacopo Giunti" (who was more a publisher than a writer), given the fact that the little volume credits much of the ceremony's *invenzione* to Vasari, we may with some confidence attribute the imagination, as well as the verbalization, behind the project to the great biographer.[1]

Both texts spend a great deal of time describing and interpreting the grandiose array of painting that Florentine artists—most of them from the younger generation, who could be made to work faster and cheaper—had produced for the occasion. Judging from the fulsome sequence of ekphrases, while the ostensible object of veneration was Michelangelo, the most insistent strand of celebration had to do with the Medici power that was being credited with superintending the career of the great artist in the way that the framers of the event hoped it would now superintend the Academy. Indeed, it may be significant that, though among the decorations there are many pictures *of* Michelangelo, often set down in the company either of patrons or of the immortals (Figure 4-1), there do not seem to have been any pictures *by* Michelangelo, or, for that matter, copies after them.

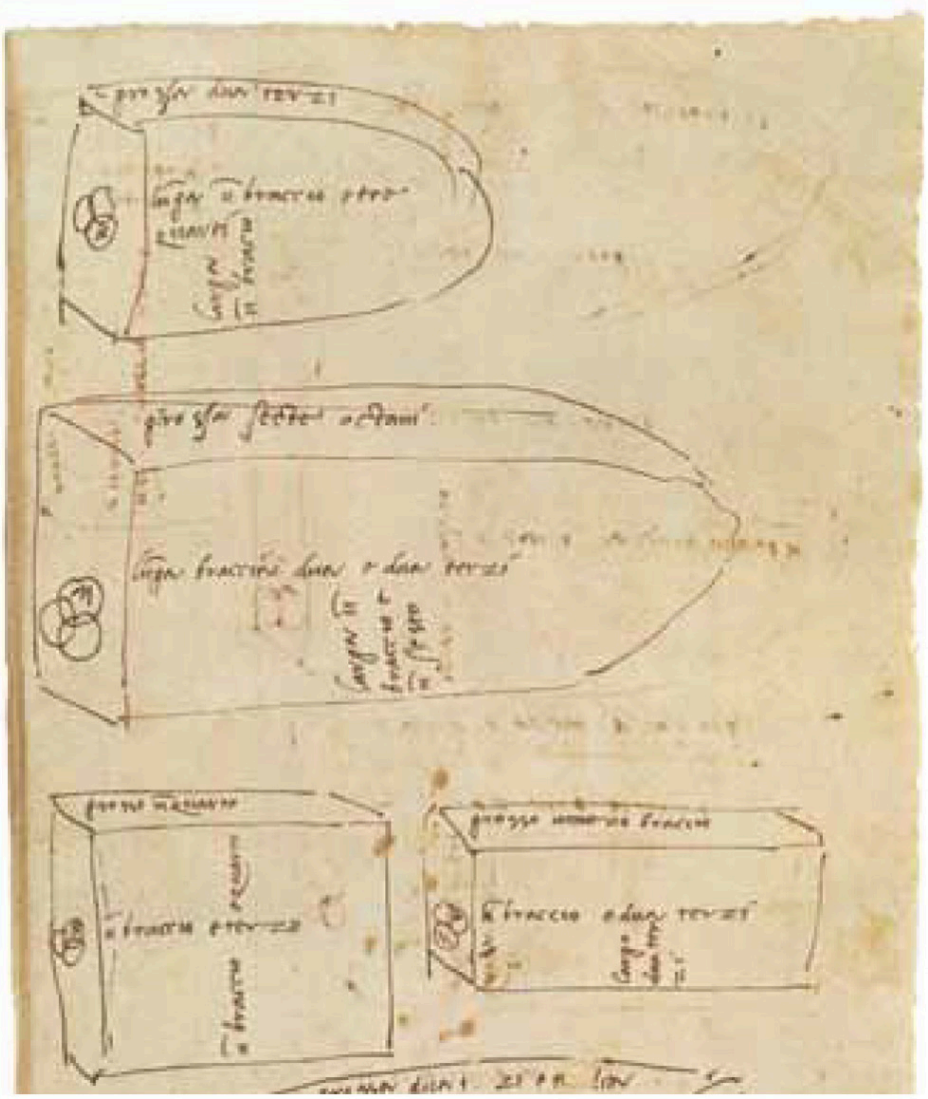
4-1. Sigismondo Curradi, *Fame Conducting Michelangelo to the Temple of Glory.* Casa Buonarroti, Florence

Only in regard to one set of images is there a glimpse of the Master's own work. It seems that interspersed with some *grotteschi*-style images of death that were placed variously about the church in the spaces between the formal allegorical paintings, there were representations of what is said in the documents to be Michelangelo's personal emblem. I quote from the *Esequie* version:

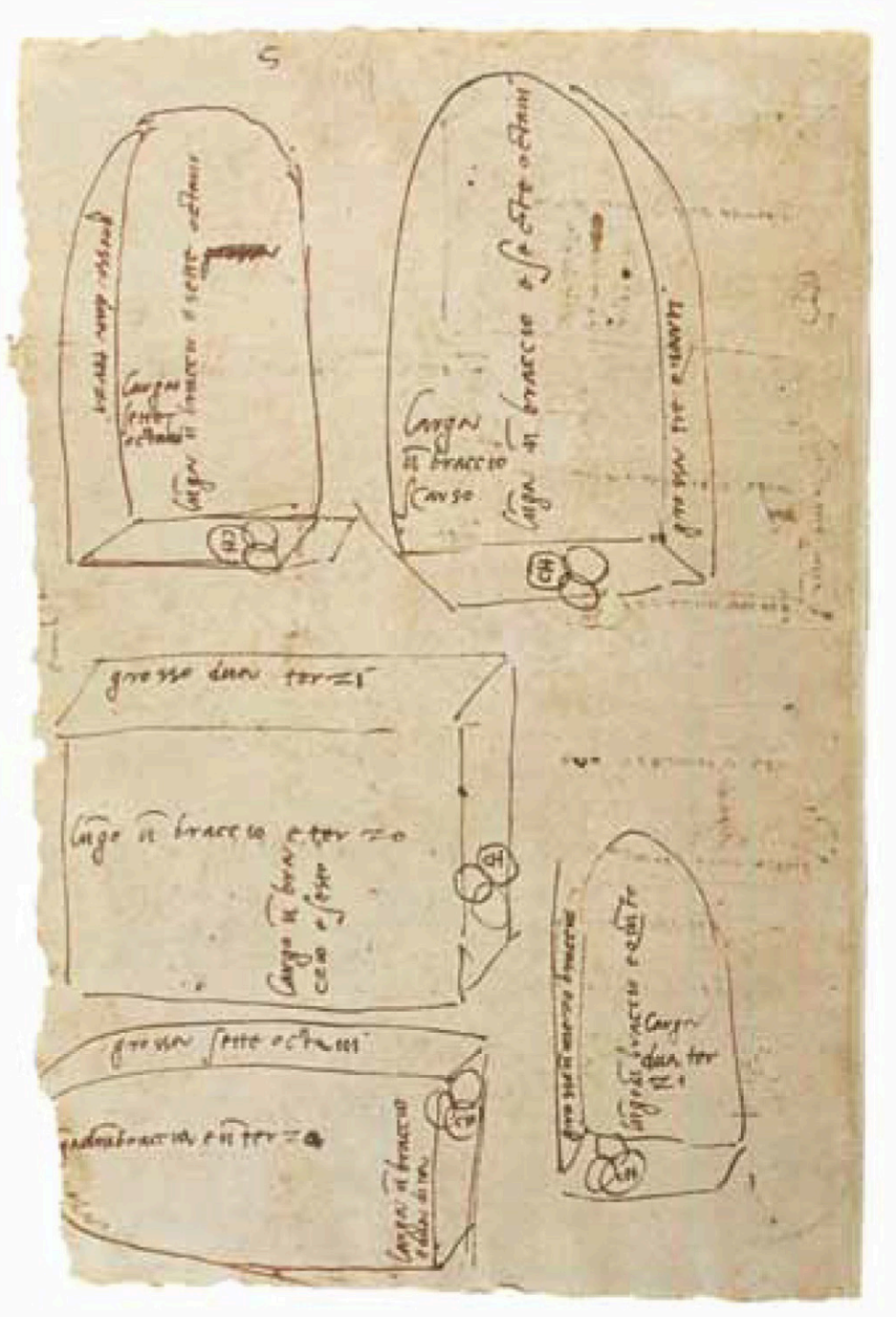
> You must know that all his life Michelangelo used as his sign, or, one might say, as his seal three intersecting circles. . . . These three circles, as I say, were intertwined in such a way that the circumference of one touched the centre of the two others, and

> vice versa, so that they were equally joined and separated. This may have meant that Michelangelo understood the three professions of sculpture, painting and architecture as being interwoven and tied together in such a way that each gives to, and receives from, the others benefit and embellishment, and that they neither can, nor ought to, be separated; or, since he was a man of exalted genius, there may also have been a more subtle meaning behind it. The academicians, then, regarding him as having been perfect in all three professions and considering that each one had furthered and embellished the other, turned the three circles into three intertwined crowns with the motto: *Tergeminis tollit honoribus*, because they wished to express that in the said three professions he had rightly earned the crown of highest perfection.[2]

The context is one of intense hermeneutics: virtually every image produced for the occasion turns out to be allegorical; and it is very much in the spirit of the Academy that learned exegetes become as necessary to the experience as the painters themselves.[3] Uniquely in this instance, though, the arcane messages are being traced back to a design by Michelangelo himself, and perhaps that is why the analysis here presents itself as uncharacteristically cautious. The writer is unsure even what to call this figure—*impresa*, *contrasegno*, *marchio*—and he is thrown back on a quite tentative reading even as he minutely analyzes the physical properties of the sign for their contribution to its meaning. Indeed, his interpretive proposal concerning the three arts, though he embraces it wholeheartedly and goes on to explain that the Academicians wrought their own meta-allegory upon it by transforming the circles into crowns, is nevertheless kept quite discrete from Michelangelo's own intentionality ("fusse … ciò"; "it *may have been* that"). The sincerest *hommage* in the whole passage may in fact be the gesture of interpretive restraint: "or else it could be that a man of high genius might have intended a subtler meaning."



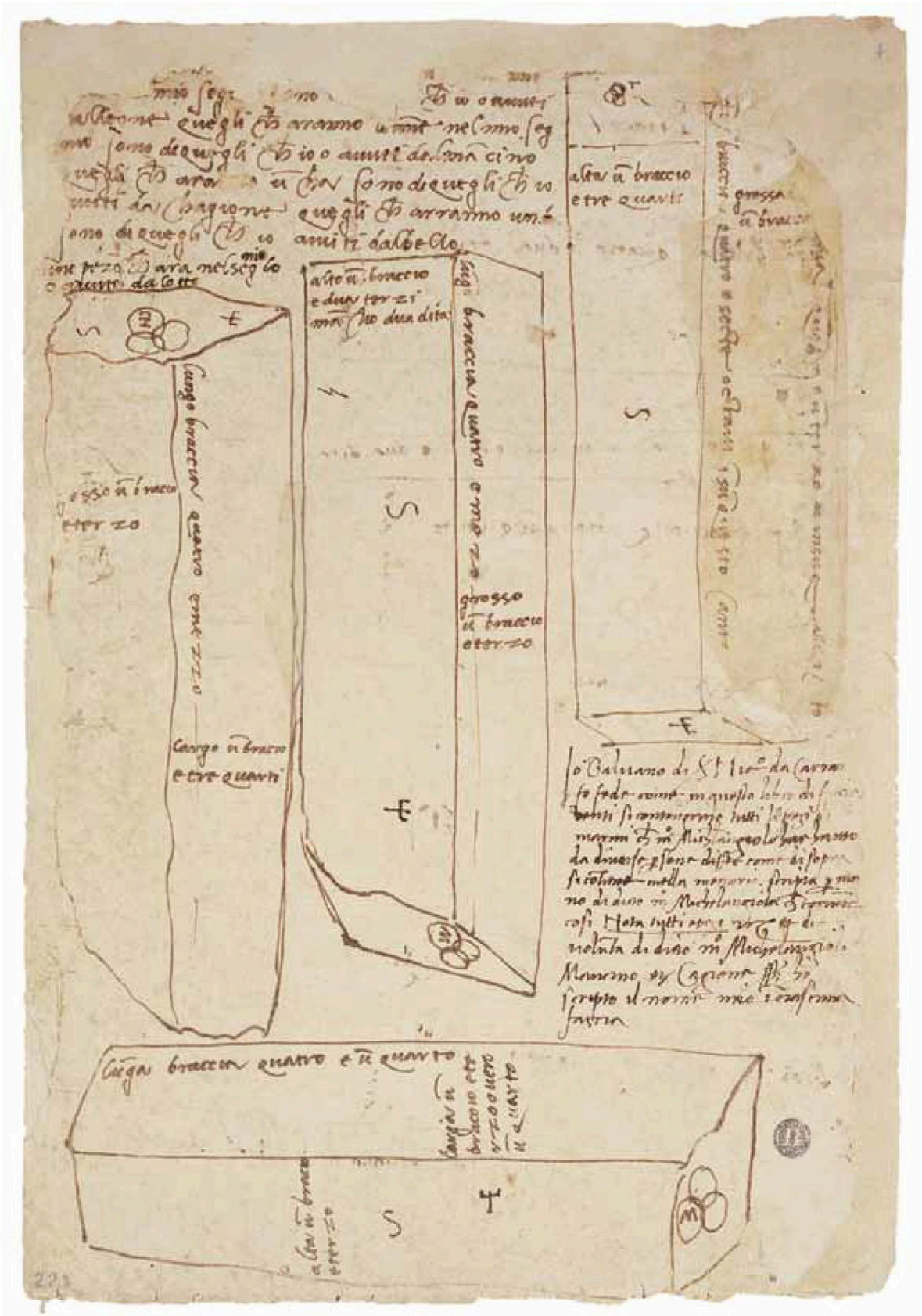
4-2. Michelangelo, drawing of marble, *Corpus* 472r (detail). Casa Buonarroti, Florence



4-3. Michelangelo, drawing of marble, *Corpus* 473v. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

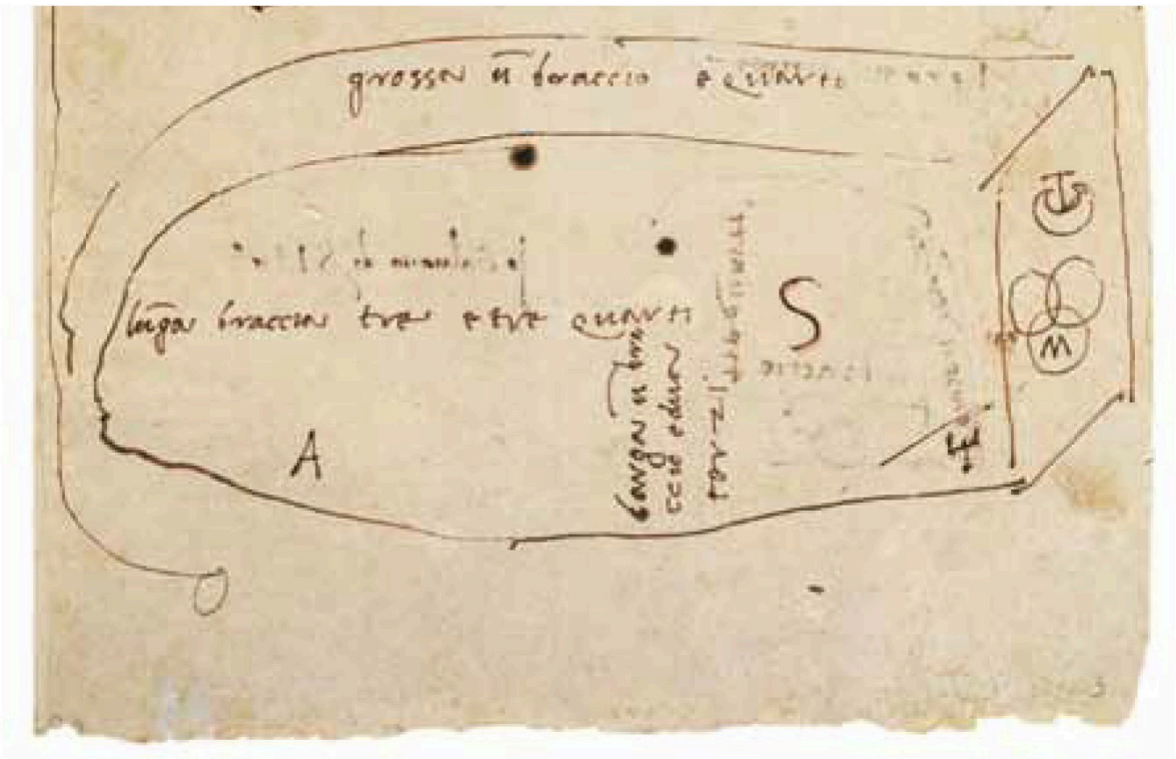
It is a well placed caution. As it happens, in all the voluminous contemporary paper trail of Michelangelo's life and career, this is the only time, so far as I know, that any mention is made of this emblem that the artist is supposed to have used all his life. In its visual form, to be sure, it appears in a notebook of sketches that record the precise dimensions of some seventy pieces of marble that have been quarried in 1521 and destined for the Medici Chapel. Each piece of marble is inscribed with the mark of the three circles (Figures 4-2, 4-3); and it is clear from various pieces of correspondence that such a mark formed part of an intricate system whereby the sculptor's raw materials were accounted for.[4] In fact, these visual pieces of record-keeping suggest a quite elaborate scheme of designation, some of which is actually

explained in a sort of glossary that the artist himself writes on one of the sheets (Figure 4-4). In almost every case, there is a letter within one of the circles, and Michelangelo's memo explains that each letter refers to a specific quarrier responsible for the acquisition of that stone. The same sheet includes a memo in the hand of the notary Calvano di Stefano attesting to the authenticity of the artist's inscriptions on these ten pages, and his characteristic "S" appears on many, though not all, of the blocks represented on them.[5]



4-4. *(facing)* Michelangelo, drawing of marble with autograph explanation, *Corpus* 467r. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

The truth is that despite all of this splendidly authoritative clarification, the fuller semiotics of this set of documents remain rather mysterious. There are, for instance, several other distinctive marks repeated on these sketches, including a half-moon with a cross or handle emerging from it and a sort of trident; quite often all three of these signs appear on the same block (Figures 4-5, 4-6). Elsewhere, on sketches of marble blocks that are not among Calvano di Stefano's notebook of attested sheets, completely different enigmatic notations appear in Michelangelo's handwriting, some of which seem vaguely alphabetic, while others are more abstract. These may indicate future placement of the marble within a particular architectural project; when Michelangelo runs out of letters from the Roman alphabet, he begins to invent signs. Whatever he may have had in mind in each particular case, it is clear that the artist's signs are susceptible to quite divergent systems of signification.[6] In 1564, the Florentine Academy submits the triple circles to an exercise of lofty hermeneutics; their presence on these drawings from nearly forty years earlier, however, suggests something more like a laundry mark. After all, it strains credulity to imagine Michelangelo as deliberately wishing to signify *le tre arti* each time that he put his personal stamp on a piece of property that was about to be shipped down the Arno. And apart from one signature including three circles and a winged *M* on a letter to Gherardo Perini,[7] itself contemporaneous with the quarrying, the emblem appears only in the context of marble inventories.

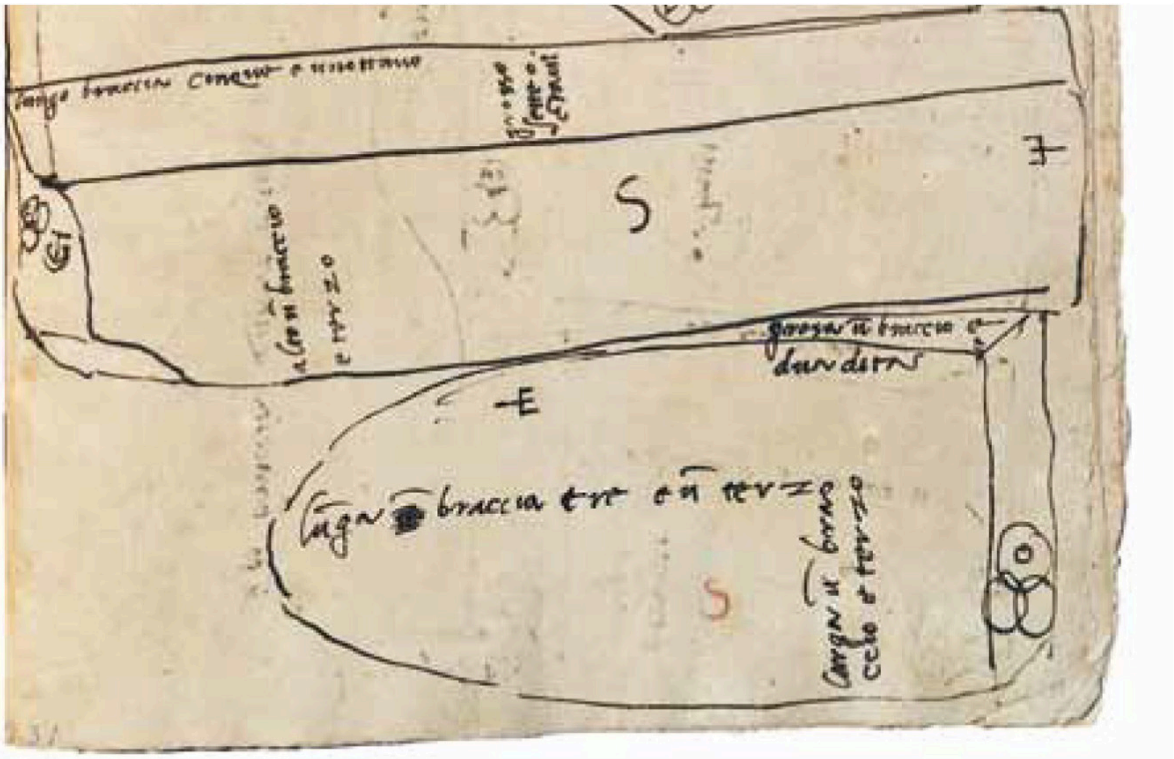


4-5. Michelangelo, drawing of marble, *Corpus* 468r (detail). Casa Buonarroti, Florence

What we learn from this menagerie of interpretable, or not so interpretable, markings is that Michelangelo was definitely a maker of pictorial signs; but it is equally clear, as we saw in the previous chapter, that he shies away from direct equivalences in the relation between images and their semantic significations. In keeping track of his marble, he may have dictated a glossary based on transparently signifying initial letters in order to specify other people's identities, but the matter of the primal inscription—the sign that signifies *himself*—is different.

The academicians wanted to locate and unlock that sign, and so do we; in order to do so, we must go back long before 1564 and before the years in which he was quarrying marble. In effect, as we shall see, this becomes a search for the artist's *più sottile intendimento* that the *Esequie* dared not delve into.

No discussion of Michelangelo's art can get very far without landing in the rich soil of his penchant for auto-representation, whether expressed textually in poems and letters or visually in self-portraiture. The Sistine sonnet-cum-caricature, discussed in the previous chapter, operates in both these modes; and, as we have already observed, it functions via complex and shifting equivalences in the act of representation. In what way does the portrait of the painter coincide with the description of him in the words of the poem, or with the actual Michelangelo; in what way does the representation of the ceiling coincide with the real fresco: in each case, the question arises but receives no very direct answer. It seems appropriate, when probing the intersection of words and images within Michelangelo's oeuvre, to consider a somewhat different kind of equivalence between artist and work. The signature is (at least in the modern world) perhaps the most time-honored way in which artists place words on their pictures and in which they posit an equation between themselves and their work.[8] The Sistine drawing offered a complex version of this relationship. Now, as we turn to other oblique ways in which Michelangelo used words and drawings to assert himself, it will be appropriate to begin with the somewhat simpler case of a signature.



4-6. Michelangelo, drawing of marble, *Corpus* 475r (detail). Casa Buonarroti, Florence

4-7. Michelangelo, *Pietà*. St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican State

By way of explaining Michelangelo's decision to write his name across the chest of the Virgin in the St. Peter's *Pietà* (Figures 4-7, 4-8), Vasari cites the sculptor's love, his labor, and his complete satisfaction with the work that he has achieved. Or at any rate this is as far as the story of the "m. angelus buonarrotus florent. facieba[t]" goes in the first edition of the *Lives*. The later edition of the book adds a further layer of explanation, however. It seems that Michelangelo one day happened to see a group of Lombards admiring the statue; when one of them asked another who the sculptor was, he was told that it was a countryman of theirs from Milan, a certain "Gobbo" (Cristoforo Solari, here given the unflattering nickname "Hunchback"). The true artist, though silent at the time, could not but choose to prevent such mistakes in the future. While Vasari makes no attempt to coordinate the logic of these two

motivations, we might read them as complementary: in 1550, it is all about the artist's *self*-satisfaction; in 1568, it has become necessary to proclaim his triumph to the world.[9]

What the two passages have in common is the assertion that in the case of this work, and *only* this work, Michelangelo wrote his name by way of signature. Whether his biographical vantage point was late in the artist's career or after his death, Vasari needed to assert and explain that the greatest of all artists never but once placed this kind of identifying text on an art object—and that on the sole occasion when he did, he did it, one might say, with a vengeance, locating his words in the intimate and focal space of the Virgin's breasts. Perhaps the hunchback story gets added because Vasari has realized the implications of the 1550 version: if this very early work was the only one Michelangelo signed, and if he signed it in recognition of his love, labor, and satisfaction, then the reader might be left thinking that he never again achieved that level of contentment with his work. In fact, Vasari further forestalls this impression by cutting the phrase about Michelangelo's being "sodisfatto e compiaciuto . . . per se medesimo." The whole matter of pleasing himself drops out of the picture.

4-8. Detail of inscription on Mary's chest from Figure 4-7

To the extent that the issue here is Michelangelo's complex relation to words, Vasari is himself heavily implicated. The subtext of Michelangelo living a life and Vasari writing one becomes quite overt in the second edition, which records as the major event in Michelangelo's life for the year 1550 the receipt of Vasari's own first edition of the *Life*; this milestone is signalled by printing the sonnet with which the artist replied to his biographer's gift, expressing himself with conceits about writing and painting and about biographical *Lives* in relation to pictures that are true-to-life.[10] In short, given what is almost a *mise en abîme* of pictorial and discursive roles for these two protagonists, Vasari can scarcely avoid being particularly alert to the textual life of his supreme artistic subject. Nor is it any coincidence that Vasari goes straight from the carving of the artist's name to quoting Giovanni Battista Strozzi's poem in praise of the *Pietà*, concluding "Laonde egli n'acquistò grandissima fama" ("from which it acquired the greatest fame"), which leaves in suspension whether it was the poem or the signature that produced this renown. From there, he concludes with his own intricate apologia in response to some foolish (*goffo*) objection that the Virgin appears too

young to have a thirty-something son. Words of attribution, identification, and justification cluster around the statue.

A signature, of course, is no ordinary set of words, all the more so when the individual in question needs to be explained both as a non-signer and as a one-time exceptionally aggressive signer. When Vasari replaces an account that ascribes this unusual act to the artist's introspection with an account that explains it as the result of what we would call copyright concerns, he also adds a new narrative episode. In the earlier version, where the motive is the mere expression of contentment, the signature simply gets located on the statue by no strenuous agency of the artist. But when the need arises to frustrate the illegitimate claims of poor Gobbo, action needs to be taken, and a new anecdote is supplied:

> Michelangelo stette cheto e quasi gli parve strano che le sue fatiche fussino attribuite a un altro; una notte vi si serrò drento e con un lumicino, avendo portato gli scarpegli, vi intagliò il suo nome.
>
> Michelangelo stood silent, but thought it something strange that his labours should be attributed to another; and one night he shut himself in there, and, having brought a little light and his chisels, carved his name upon it.[11]

Vasari solves his problem of justification by turning the event into an act of ingenious and solitary heroism. The act of producing these words becomes just a little clandestine, and quite laborious, very much like the making of sculpture itself.

Not that the artist was shy about his name, per se. Through nearly seventy years of his correspondence, well over four hundred letters bear some version of his signature, sometimes quite prominently, in a variety of formulas but always including *Michelagniolo* (far less often *Buonarroti*), and with modifiers that range from *Vostro* to elaborate acts of obeisance like *Di vostra Signoria illustrissima e reverendissima Umile servo*.[12] Given the ritual nature of this act of signing, even in our own day, it is probably unwise to overanalyze the choices Michelangelo makes or to gauge the relevance of the phrasing to the situation of the recipient or the mood of the writer. Much has been made of the fact that he attaches *scultore* to his name (already in one of the earliest documents we have), though he does that for only one in every seven letters. It is also tempting to observe that the last letter we possess, written seven weeks before his death, closes with the boldly self-assertive *Io Michelagniolo Buonarroti*; here, too, it is best to be cautious in interpretation.[13] Equally intriguing—without, again, being definitive—is the regular appearance of the same phrase at the beginning of the artist's *ricordi*, which are often scarcely more than notes to himself and therefore not in need of grandiose self-certification. Whatever it may mean, then, Michelangelo seems to have shied away from signing paintings and sculpture while taking special pains to write his name on pieces of paper.

It is probably a mistake, though, to consider the artist's relationship to inscribing his name as consistent across all these decades of writing. After all, Vasari's story about the *Pietà*, even though it is told later and then again much later, refers to events at the very beginning of his career. It is, in fact, this period, when Michelangelo is fashioning himself and his name, that takes us to his boldest, and perhaps most famous, self-declaration on paper—a case as mysterious and unique as the inscription between the Virgin's breasts, but for which we have no contemporary explanation. If there has been insufficient attention to the writing on the drawings, this Louvre sheet (Figure 4-9), with autograph words and images on both sides, is the great exception. Few scholars, whatever conclusions they may have been pursuing about the place of these sketches in Michelangelo's early production, could ignore the act of self-

identification that the artist makes so explicitly in the lines "Davicte cholla fromba | e io collarcho," particularly since it appears next to drawings that are clearly related to the subject of the Old Testament hero. And, over the last few decades, very interesting work has been done on the precise terms of this comparison. [14] But to understand the full force of image and text as they operate on this sheet, we must take a broader view of the artist's career and his culture at this moment than, I believe, has yet been attempted.

4-9. *(facing)* Michelangelo, studies for statues of David, *Corpus* 19r. Louvre 714. Louvre, Paris

By the time that this drawing is executed, generally agreed to be 1501 or 1502, the young artist has emerged from the Medicean world of his apprenticeship, has done some work in

Bologna and Rome, the latter including two significant commissions in marble, the *Bacchus* and the St. Peter's *Pietà*; he also seems to have executed one large-scale effort—a *Hercules*—on his own initiative. He has been, as the Italians would say, an *emergente*, but he is hardly flooded with offers. Then, over a single twelve-month period, first in August of 1501 and then in August of 1502, precisely the period to which this sheet dates, he receives two significant commissions: first, a *David* in marble intended for the Florentine Duomo and second (again), a *David* in bronze for Pierre de Rohan, Marechal Gié, who had been a *liaison* for the French King in Italy. Given the vast number of artistic subjects, ancient and modern, classical and biblical, to choose from at this moment in history, this seems like rather an overabundance of Davids.[15]

The David-craze is not limited to this pair of years, or to this artist, however. The two greatest *quattrocento* sculptors had produced *David*s. Verrocchio's bronze (Figure 4-10) dates from ca. 1466, while Donatello treated the subject at least twice (Figures 4-11, 4-12), first in marble, ca. 1409, and then in bronze, at a date variously posited between the 1430s and 1450s.[16] All three of these works had long been installed in significant Florentine spaces. By the time that Michelangelo's marble colossus has been completed in 1504, discussions about the placement of the statue in the Piazza della Signoria have taken place, which are generally understood to reveal that the youthful hero with the slingshot had earned emblematic underdog status with which the Florentine republic identified itself.[17] Yet the fact that the Donatello and Verrocchio works had been commissioned by Medicean rulers and displayed prominently in the seats of their power suggests a more complex and labile set of significations for this figure. In effect, as the subject of David begins to achieve such prominence in Michelangelo's *atelier*, it manages to encompass the causes of Mediceanism and republicanism, to find expression in bronze and marble, and—perhaps most important of all—to lay claim to the pedigree of the greatest artists of previous generations.

4-10. Andrea del Verrocchio, *David*. Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence

4-11. Donatello, *David.* Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence

4-12. Donatello, *David.* Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence

These matters take on even more weight when we look at the particular histories of the two commissions that landed upon the young artist in such a short time. It is by no means coincidental that the order placed by Maréchal Gié should have a result (as is clear from the sketch on the Louvre sheet, our only direct access to this statue) that stands in a complex relation to earlier work in bronze. A year before Michelangelo was given this opportunity—and still within the period of the penwork on this page—the Florentine ambassadors report the Maréchal's desire for a souvenir of his Italian journey:

> Maréchal Gié proves to be fond of the City, and with great urgency he has requested of us that we write to Your Lordship to the effect that he would desire that there be cast (*gittare*) a bronze figure of a David, like that in the courtyard of Your Lordship.[18]

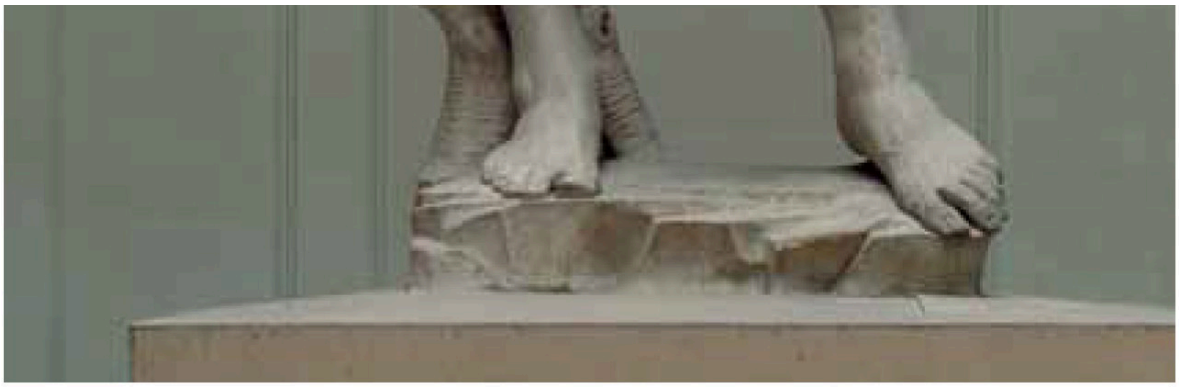
Two weeks later (clearly, there has been some insistent pressure), the Signoria informs the ambassadors that they have not been able to find anyone who can cast this figure, because, they say, "ci è hoggi charestia di simili buoni maestri" (2.54: "there is a lack these days of that kind of good masters"). Soon after that, one of the ambassadors reports that the Maréchal is pestering him every day about the project. The paper trail then vanishes until the Signoria confirms the contract with Michelangelo.

As it turns out, during the intervening year something has happened to the project. The earlier language was all about copying; indeed, the word used is *gittare*, which suggests the making of a mold that would have been used to produce a replica of the Palazzo Vecchio bronze. There is no such verb in the 1502 contract, nor any reference to a previous model. The only stipulations concern dimensions, materials, and moneys to be paid to the artist, all of which would be normal in a contract for a completely original piece of art. [19] It is tempting to speculate on the relation between the hiring of Michelangelo and the change to a project that seems to have promised more artistic freedom. Let us say, at least, that the twenty-seven-year-old artist is no longer the lad in the Medici sculpture garden who makes his name by imitating and counterfeiting.[20] Still, this breakthrough project has deep roots in the art of the past. The fact that it is not even clear which *David* in the Palazzo Vecchio the Maréchal had wished to replicate[21] merely adds to a sense that when Michelangelo undertook to create this bronze work, he was operating in the highly charged force field of his most eminent predecessors.

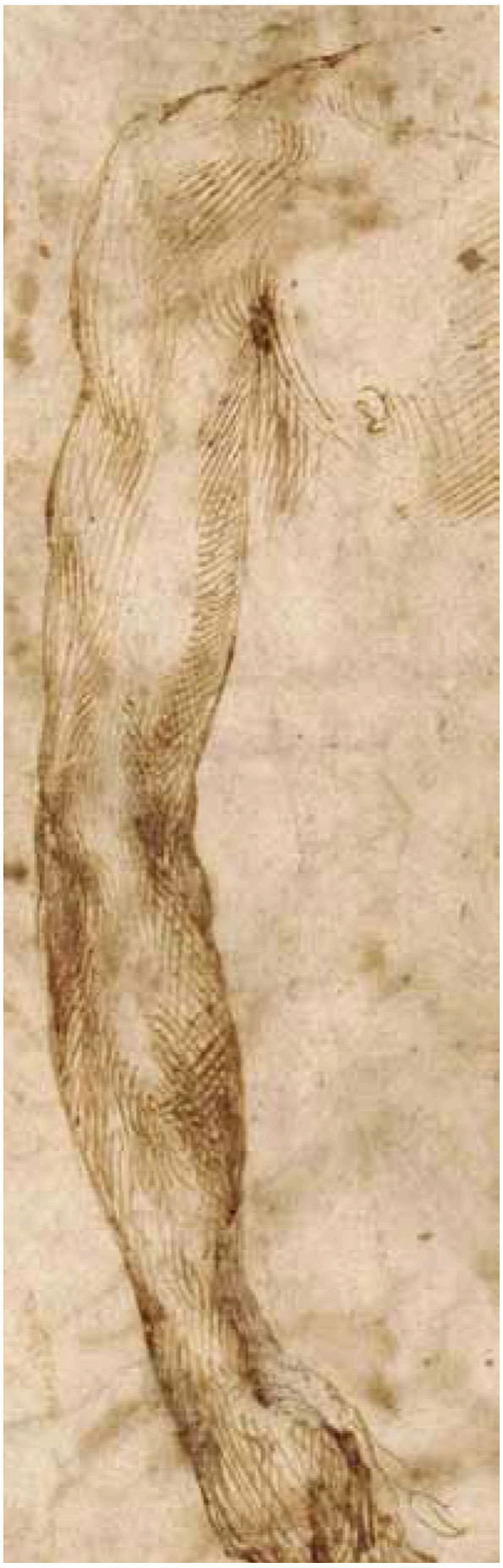
The backstory for the marble *David* (Figure 4-13) is even longer. There is no need to rehearse a narrative that is so richly documented in the archive of the Duomo and that has been so carefully reconstructed by historians from Vasari onwards.[22] Let it suffice to say that, at the moment when Michelangelo begins to cover the Louvre sheet with his early thoughts regarding this figure, almost a century of active civic discussion is reaching its point of resolution. Some of the loudest of these conversations are about the material itself. Throughout the *quattrocento*, there had been various celebrated pieces of marble, quarried and transported with legendary difficulty, and subjected to exhaustive efforts, mostly unsuccessful, that aimed to shape the raw material into massive finished works; in particular, there was a running debate on that favorite theme of professionals in the world of sculpture: whether a work can be made out of one piece of marble or whether one must settle for a composite production. The works that were supposed to emerge from these many decades of administrative effort were destined for a variety of locations, always prominent, within the architectural plan of the cathedral. The challenges posed by these projects included not only quarrying and chiseling but also maintaining the integrity and the surface condition of the finished works, given that they were generally conceived as massive free-standing sculptures and that the building's original architecture was not designed for such adornment. That decision for independent three-dimensionality placed these projects in direct relation to legendary out-sized masterpieces of the ancients, or *colossi*, as theorized by Alberti, or as recorded in Pliny, or (in a few cases, like the *Dioscuri* on the Quirinal), as visible to the modern eye.[23]

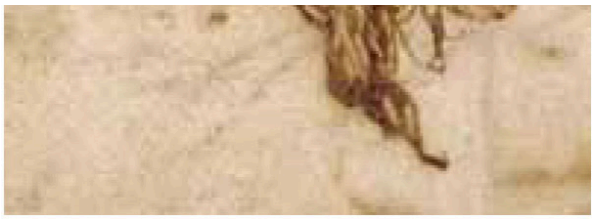
The very language used to designate the pieces of marble in this long trail of documents reverberates with significance. Over the years, the block is referred to variously as *gigante*, *uomo*, and *statua*, betraying not only a sense of the object's grandeur but also a suggestion that it had already in part arrived at its perfected final form, even when no artist had yet touched it.[24] The proposed subjects for the sculptures that might potentially emerge from these blocks are also monumental. Through many iterations of the project, and even when

there are few actually realized works (or none), the iconographic program is focussed on the Prophets of the Hebrew Bible, including Joshua as well as David. Yet as early as 1415, well before we might imagine a syncretic humanism to have held sway, the program is expanded to include no less a figure than Hercules. As noteworthy as the proposed subjects are the artists whose names are connected with these undertakings: Nanni di Banco and Agostino di Duccio in major roles; Brunelleschi, by way of some gilding work on the *Hercules*; Andrea Sansovino and Leonardo as possible candidates to work the block in 1501 (or at least such is the rumor that Vasari records as fact); and, most significantly, Donatello, who had produced his various versions during the earlier years and then may have been slated as principal artist at the time of his death in the 1460s.[25]



4-13. Michelangelo, *David*. Accademia, Florence





4-14. Detail of Figure 4-9

All of which is to say that even before Michelangelo has picked up a chisel, the David project already stands as a compendium of everything that might either threaten or exalt his career. It is almost as though David is writing Michelangelo's biography before he has even had a chance to live his life. Donatello; Hercules; the Medici; the Republic; marble vs. bronze; single blocks vs. multiple pieces; monumental stone; monumental iconography; *gigante*, colossus: the situation is, as the Freudians would call it, overdetermined.

On this recto, in fact, Michelangelo produces an overlay of responses to all of these multiple stimuli. The first penstrokes on the sheet, we can be reasonably certain, belong to the figure at the center, generally described as an arm but in fact including a notable segment of the attached upper torso (Figure 4-14). The resemblance of this sketch to the eventual marble *David* is incontrovertible, suggesting that already at this point, at least two years before the statue was ready to be publicly installed, Michelangelo had in mind the most sweepingly original element in his *David* project: not only a sculpture in the round that could stand on its own feet (which was implicit in the whole history of the marble) but, more particularly, a free-floating right arm, monumental both in appearance and in iconographic significance. Its independence from the torso would constitute the greatest possible act of sculptural audacity, given all the past anxieties surrounding attempts to carve up the recalcitrant medium of this block. Drawing it on paper, of course, proves nothing about the possibility that it will emerge from the stone. What we see is the *wish* to produce an arm that owes little or nothing to the stable mass that represents the structuring body; hence, the far vaguer qualities of the chest to which the upper end of the limb is connected. And the *pentimenti* in the hand—the other sketchy element in the design—may even perhaps reflect an anxious sense that this thrillingly unstable appendage might need to be anchored, as it will eventually be, by an attachment to the leg that appears casual but is in fact integral to the work's solidity.

At some later moment, though probably not much later, Michelangelo takes this sheet, rotates it 180 degrees and, with a different pen but the same sort of ink, begins work toward another piece of sculpture. As we have seen in earlier chapters, in considering what it might have meant for the artist to produce sketches for diverse works in close proximity to one another, my inclination is to avoid the extremes of interpretation; that is, to avoid seeing them as either a unified artistic conception or as separate entities that reveal nothing about each other. In this case, the sheet suggests several sorts of interconnection. There is the relationship of space: the new sketch neatly occupies an area of the page that is, in effect, framed by the old sketch. There is the correlation of scale, with the representation of the bronze statue radically smaller—and neatly measurable—in relation to the earlier work. And there is the fact of inversion: the new drawing distinguishes itself, or its space, by locating the old drawing in an upside-down position. To be sure, the inversion by no means erases the force of the old drawing, since the arm is powerfully readable in either direction. This is quite distinct from the reverse situation: when the arm is in its proper downward orientation, the

other sketch becomes nearly meaningless, since it consists of an upside-down body defined by a force of gravity that has now gone topsy-turvy.

As Michelangelo proceeds to write words on this piece of paper (Figure 4-15)—in an orientation that sees the bronze rightside up and the marble arm upside down—it should not surprise us, after all this, that the first word would be *David*. Yet nowhere else in the entire archive of text on the drawings does he write the name of the subject next to the image. In fact, the word "David" is not used here in the way that words were used to name Christ's ancestors on the Sistine Ceiling; that is, as captions identifying the figures portrayed next to the words; it is used instead to identify the person doing the sketching. Just how we are to understand this equivalence turns out to be anything but straightforward, however. The biblical hero's attribute, *la fromba*, refers, clearly enough, to the slingshot that brings down the giant Goliath; the *arco*, which belongs to Michelangelo, is not so easy to parse. The earliest exegesis we have—it comes from the artist's grand-nephew, who published the poems in a notoriously unreliable edition in 1623—proposes that the *arco* was a reference to David's harp.[26] Another line of interpretation suggests this was a bow that Michelangelo intended to use as a weapon against his older rival, Leonardo. The most widely accepted equivalence, first advanced by Marcel Brion and then elaborated by Charles Seymour, argued that the *arco* (more normally *archetto*) refers to a sculpting tool, a sort of rotating hand drill, used in antiquity and then again in early modern times, to produce even curvatures in blocks of stone.[27]

4-15. Detail of Figure 4-9

4-16. Sigismundo Fanti, *Triompho di Fortuna*. Card 38: The realm of Jupiter. Gift of Paul Sachs, 1925 (25.7). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

In a performance of vertiginous bravura, Irving Lavin has pursued a chain of associations that begins with the sculpting tool and proceeds to the *seste ad arco,* or compass, which enabled artists to transfer their conceptions from two dimensions to three and from small to large.[28] From there, Lavin goes on to illustrate representations of David slaying Goliath that closely resemble the images of a sculptor (in one case specifically named as "Michael Fiorentino" [Figure 4-16]) in the act of wrestling with his material.[29] He also relates David to Hercules, for which there are precedents not only in biblical typology but also in the earlier history of the *David* marble and of Michelangelo's career; and he shows how both of these figures become prototypes of the artist.

But the range of possibilities cannot be completed until we consider the other piece of Michelangelo's handwriting on the page. At shoulder level of the sketch for the marble *David*'s arm, still in its upside-down orientation, the artist has written "Rocte lalta cholonna el verd […]." Despite the truncation of the phrase (not, apparently, due to the sheet being cut down), the penmanship exhibits the same elegant formality as the inscriptions above. In this case, however, the words are not Michelangelo's original conceit, but are rather taken from the opening line of a Petrarch sonnet whose complete first quatrain I quote:

> Rotta è l'alta colonna e 'l verde lauro
> che facean ombra al mio stanco pensero;
> perduto ò quel che ritrovar non spero
> dal borrea a l'austro, o dal mar indo al mauro.
>
> Broken are the high Column and the green Laurel that gave shade to my weary cares; I have lost what I do not hope to find again, from Boreas to Auster or from the Indian to the Moorish Sea. [30]

The poet is here lamenting the deaths, within a short span of time, of his best friend and his beloved. While nearly all consideration of this quotation has focussed (rightly) on the words that Michelangelo actually cites, it is worth pointing out that, given his deep familiarity with the *Rime*, he very likely has the whole poem in his mind, a conclusion supported by the fact that on another, probably contemporaneous, drawing he quotes more fully from a different Petrarch sonnet composed in the same period and on a similarly mournful theme.[31] However we wish to construe the specific verbal and visual materials on this recto, then, it is clear that the young artist is thinking about death at the same time as he is thinking about sculpture.

We will come back to the dyad of death and sculpture in later chapters. First, though, it is worth stopping at the point where Michelangelo stopped, with the word *lauro*. Lorenzo de' Medici had given himself, and been given, the name *Laurus*, in what was doubtless an imitation of the extensive punning on *Laura*/*lauro* that Petrarch initiated in his *Rime*; and we might certainly suppose that Michelangelo is engaging in a corresponding *imitatio* as regards Lorenzo's death.[32] Though that event was not nearly so recent as Laura's had been when Petrarch penned the original lines (Lorenzo died about ten years before this sheet was produced), we are left in no doubt by Vasari and Condivi that it had been a traumatic event in Michelangelo's life. Perhaps more to the point, the question of republican vs. Medicean power in Florence has a direct influence on the production of the marble *David*, a fact that would amply account for the artist having Lorenzo on his mind. And if it should surprise us that Michelangelo is thinking elegiacally of princely rulers while sketching a republican icon, we might conjecture that he is nostalgic for the days of the *good* Medici while living in fear of the recently exiled *bad* ones.

Equally intriguing is the part of the line that the artist *does* write on the sheet. Petrarch's *colonna* is a pun on his friend's name, and there is a nice symmetry in the relation between an individual death and an emblem of massive breakdown, particularly given the poet's lifelong concern with the traces of ruined antiquity, not to mention the similarly classical associations of *lauro*. Michelangelo, of course, has no friend conveniently named Colonna (not *yet*, and when he does, some decades in the future, it will be a woman), but he is at work on producing his own form of a colossus, which is to be carved out of a vast, column-shaped piece of marble. If that is his train of thought, there has been a kind of reversal of the Petrarchan original: what signified the collapse of civilization in 1348 turns out to describe the

process of artistic creation a century and a half later. Which may point to the simplest set of associations between the two pieces of writing: the arch and the column, after all, are the fundamental components of classical architecture, which Michelangelo may have already been contemplating in relation to his work as a sculptor.

Now, all these interpretations of *arco*, along with the various subsidiary or independent exegeses of *colonna* and *lauro*, raise some fundamental questions. What is at stake for Michelangelo in pursuing these various associations? What is the lure of associative thinking itself? And what made it necessary not merely to think these thoughts but also to frame them verbally and to inscribe them, along with the near *hapax legomenon* of his signature, in the same space as the drawings with which they appear to have such intriguing relations?

The drawings, on this sheet and elsewhere, pose no such apparent perplexities. Michelangelo is an artist (in 1502, he could not by any stretch of the imagination be considered a writer), and when he covers sheets of paper with sketches such as these two Davids, he is pursuing normal intermediary stages in a process that begins either with a mental picture or a studio model and ends with a material art object. It is possible to imagine words of a kind that would fit into this process: notes about some technical aspect of realizing the work, for example.[33] But, given their very status as surplus, we need to understand the verbal expression on this sheet as fulfilling quite different purposes. Perhaps these words, then, are as essential to Michelangelo's work as the sketches, and the "work" in this case is not merely two pieces of sculpture but the launching of a career.

This set of purposes is, I think, bound up with the rhetorical proposition about the slingshot and the bow. By deciding that the underlying reference in *arco* was to David's harp, Michelangelo il Giovane was recognizing some of the basic terms of the comparison. The attribute must be something that the artist and the biblical hero share, but there must be a significant difference between the operation of these Davidian accoutrements. Yet this reading fails to take account of the fact that for *arco* to make any sense at all it has to refer at least in part to some sort of weapon; otherwise, there is no parallel to *fromba*. In fact, the underlying premise of the statement involves the implication that Michelangelo, too, has a weapon and that it is different from (presumably better than) David's. This kind of *querelle* can be traced back to the widely influential conversation that initiates Ovid's Daphne story, in which Apollo boasts of the armaments he has used to kill the deadly Python and goes on to ridicule Cupid for the comparative puniness of the Love God's weaponry, only to be felled by it himself.[34] Whether eros is involved or not, this is always a story about the unexpected defeat of brute force by some alternative form of power.

Imagining Michelangelo as asserting his skills with the harp might point in this direction: after all, in the hands of Amphion or Orpheus music did have remarkably creative powers that might suitably contrast with the ability to bring down Goliath.[35] And even if we wish to translate the issue into terms closer to Michelangelo's own art form, the idea that the artist was identifying himself with the psalmist side of the biblical hero, and separating himself from the giant-slaying side, is certainly intriguing. Indeed, even if the *arco* is not a musical instrument, it is certainly plausible that Michelangelo might be making some sort of contrast between brute force and (as several editors have suggested) his own *ingegno*.[36] This is why the drilling tool is such an attractive reading. If this is the *arco* that Michelangelo has in mind, then at least one set of meanings becomes fairly clear: he is a young marble-slayer and his operations upon the stone are analogous to David's act of defeating the Philistine—the more so because of the term *gigante* that was applied to the marble. And, since the specific operations of the *archetto*, however intensely they act upon the stone, are nevertheless

gentler than the more primitive tools of hammer and chisel, the comparison conveys both the force and the ingenuity that Michelangelo wishes to claim for himself.[37]

If the proposition about *fromba* and *arco* has to do with something like forcefulness and artfulness, then Michelangelo is claiming to conquer with his talent and skill, rather than with a rock. On the other hand, he, too, is working with a rock (quite forcefully, as it happens), and, since the premise is that he is outdoing David, he is declaring himself in the end to be just as much a conqueror as the figure he is sculpting; indeed, he is conquering the conqueror. In this way, the "I" who speaks this phrase claims to possess all the qualities inherent in the Biblical hero while adding other qualities that, though they might be construed as opposites of David's qualities, rather function as their completion or fulfillment. By the same token, his sculpted David will operate as an amalgam of opposing qualities, and he will himself be the summation of the contraries identifiable as "I" and David.

My terms here, admittedly, show an indebtedness to the labyrinthine logic of post-structuralism, but we do not need to posit a radically anachronistic Michelangelo in order to see him as hungry for the rhetorical properties of language. Within a few years, he will be writing poetry whose roller-coaster *concettismo* will anticipate Giambattista Marino and Richard Crashaw by a century; it should come as no surprise that he is laboring with the disjointed particles of complex figuration in 1502.[38] The tropic exercise of *fromba* and *arco*, with all its ambiguity and multivalence of signification, with its slide of metaphor and simile, with its equivalences that are at the same time contraries, is fundamental to language. More particularly, it embodies that which the artist cannot find in his own medium. When Michelangelo expresses himself enigmatically—and that will be characteristic of many pieces of text on his sheets of paper—he is in fact drawing upon a mode of expression of which words are capable but visual representation (allegedly) is not. Consider the terms in which Leonardo denounces the poet:

> The poet becomes a broker, who gathers various persons together to conclude a deal. If you wish to discover the true office of the poet, you will find that he is nothing other than an accumulator of things stolen from various sciences, with which he fabricates a deceitful composition—or we may more fairly say a fictional composition.[39]

That distinction between the multi-valence of words and the (supposed) unity of pictures can be traced back at least to the highly influential opening lines of Horace's *Ars poetica*, where the verbal artist is urged to conform to a decorum that is grounded in the work of a good painter, whose creations are shaped in unitary rather than conglomerated forms.[40] Michelangelo, however, is not satisfied with the organic unities ascribed to visual representation. For him, I would venture to say, the act of drawing, even though he stretches it into highly idiosyncratic realms, is subject to the tyrannies of mimesis. A picture of David must resemble either the legendary David, or some earlier picture of David, or some David in the real world. Language affords him the opportunity to radicalize and multiply these canons of resemblance. Indeed, with all the artistic, political, and personal urgencies that this project held for him, it was imperative for the process of creating the final product to traverse a medium such as language, which, unlike visual art, could not be judged merely by the notion that it provided a transparent representation of reality. It also permits him, short of physical self-portraiture, to insert himself into the picture. Whereas Leonardo decried the supplementary qualities of language as fictions, Michelangelo required them.

As it happens, picture and word themselves stand in a relation which is similar to that between *fromba* and *arco*: they are partly parallel expressions, both emerging out of the

significances of David, but they are also opposites, in the sense that drawing pictures and writing words are radically different as regards both their mental and their manual processes. But unlike the situation with Michelangelo's explicit comparison, according to which the bow began as a simple contrast to the slingshot but ended up as its fulfillment, in this case neither term has priority and neither term acts as summation. In fact, both the images and the words on the sheet are insufficient. Neither functions as a supplement to the other; they do not, as it were, add up. To reach this fulfillment or summation, we have to consider a different binary relationship, one that embraces both the drawings and the finished art objects. The most fundamental binary on the Louvre sheet is the neighboring presence of two different pieces of sculpture. As it turns out, they, too, align themselves in much the same way as *fromba* and *arco*. The bronze *David* conforms to artistic tradition by representing the narrative moment just after the giant has been slain; his decapitated head and the weapon that brought him down are both in evidence.[41] This David, in other words, is clearly a figure of force, while, by contrast, the sculptor is the dutiful follower of the artists and iconographers who have preceded him. This work, in short, does not live up to the textual boast across the page.

It is therefore no surprise that the projected bronze *David* spends years in sporadic production, frustrates the wishes of the politically important individuals who had commissioned it, and ends up needing to be completed by another artist. If, by contrast, the marble *David* counts as one of Michelangelo's most efficiently accomplished pieces of work (his last such in sculpture, one might say), the reason may be that it *does* fulfill the verbal boast. The radical iconographic choice—to depict an anticipatory, or perhaps reflective, moment in the David story, rather than the customary scene of triumph where the hero poses atop his oversized trophy—represents in itself a decision against brute force and in favor of other, more inward aspects of the tale. But this is a choice that has as much to do with artistic enterprise as with biblical narrative. Donatello's marble *David*, which was a significant precursor not for the iconography of Michelangelo's colossal work but for its medium, did not merely include the enormous head of Goliath at David's feet but depended on this great mass for both the compositional and the material stability of the whole construction. In fact, it is a combination of the head and the considerable quantity of garments in which David is swathed that gives this earlier work its physical solidity. Michelangelo permits himself neither clothing nor decapitated head; or perhaps it was the marble on which he was obliged to operate that dictated these omissions. It comes to the same thing: Michelangelo must use his *ingegno* to create a David without the customary sign of physical power, and in the process he creates a David whose character is itself more than, or other than, athletic. To do this, of course, the sculptor needs both force and imagination: he must work the famously challenging piece of marble, and he must conceive of David in a new way.

The drawing, with its particular way of relating the older and the newer visions of the project, signals some of the underlying terms in this reconception. Whatever its religious or typological significances, the story of David and Goliath becomes for the artist—*any* artist—a set of problems in scale. The text in 1 Samuel could scarcely be more explicit about the issues of measurement involved: Goliath is "six cubits and a span" in height, his coat of mail weighs five thousand shekels, and his spearhead weighs six hundred shekels. (Biblical measures are notoriously difficult to translate, but this puts Goliath at anywhere from nine to thirteen feet tall, and his accoutrements weigh 125 lbs. and 15 lbs. respectively.[42]) David is given no specific dimensions, but the point is made repeatedly that he is the youngest, smallest, and most fresh-faced of the Israelites. How does one represent a monstrous giant and a petite stripling in the same space? Even medieval artists, with their decidedly pre-modern conceptions of space, give evidence of the difficulties involved. Some, like the maker of one of

the silver Cyprus plates at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Figure 4-17), defy the fundamental premise of the plot by representing the two figures as similar in size; others, quite ingeniously, represent David vertically and Goliath at an angle (e.g., one of the capitals at Vézélay [Figure 4-18]).[43] Of course, putting the giant in a semi-recumbent posture inevitably moves the story along from the face-to-face battle scene and toward the episode of the giant's death. And Renaissance artists seal his iconographic fate by virtually never representing him as anything but a decapitated head in the hands of his conqueror.

Michelangelo will change all this with his dramatically foreshortened composition in one of the Sistine pendentives (Figure 4-19), where the scale problem is solved—neo-medievally, as it were—by representing David upright and the soon-to-be decapitated Goliath as prone. Later in his career (Figure 4-20), he attacks the compositional problems of this combat with another set of variations which, as Irving Lavin has demonstrated, are themselves exercises in artistic questions of *contrapposto* and *paragone*; indeed, they stage David and Goliath in the position of sculptor and marble.[44] Perhaps these are all responses to the constraints he feels back in 1502, when he produces the Louvre sheet, where either David must have a severed head at his feet, or his right arm must exhibit no sign of battle at all. Which puts us back in the realm where *either . . . or* yearns to become *both . . . and*.

4-17. Combat of David and Goliath. Silver plate. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.396). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

4-18. David and Goliath capital, Vézelay Cathedral

But there are more issues of scale here than those dictated by the biblical dimensions of Goliath. It is perhaps too obvious to point out that the drawing is itself an exercise in David-and-Goliath proportionality, with the entire body of the sketch for the bronze work fitting almost precisely in the space of the projected marble arm. Such ratios are of interest not merely to giants and giant-killers but also to artists who are engaged in translating from one medium into another—say, from a drawing to a model to a final work. Which makes the suggestion that the *arco* refers to a pair of compasses particularly attractive. Similar issues, especially relevant here, arise in the translation from one artist to another. Verrocchio's bronze *David* was about four feet tall, Donatello's bronze about five feet tall, and his marble version about six feet tall. Judging from the contract for Michelangelo's lost bronze, it was to be on the modest scale of Verrocchio's dimensions. The marble *David*, on the other hand, is no less than fourteen feet tall.[45]

4-19. Michelangelo, David and Goliath pendentive. Sistine Chapel, Vatican Palace, Vatican State

That exponential leap was, to be sure, dictated not merely by the young artist's personal ambition, but also by the dimensions of the marble. When we remind ourselves that this block was generally referred to as *lo gigante*, we begin to realize just how paradoxical all these equations and proportions can become. If David is already a *gigante*, then Goliath—even his head alone—must be off the charts; no wonder that he has to be left out of the composition. And it is this reversible and recombinable quality of the David-and-Goliath relationship that seems to underlie Michelangelo's thinking. In referring to the biblical account, I have been stressing the differences in mass between the combatants, but the real point of the story has more to do with their exchangeability. Goliath is covered in massive armor plating. David, by contrast, appears fresh from his shepherding duties, his only qualification the fact that, unarmed, he has protected his lambs from lions and bears. When David insists on going up against the Philistine, Saul takes the precaution of dressing the boy in his own royal armor, presumably in an attempt to level the playing field. The shepherd lad, however, promptly sheds the borrowed battle gear, explaining to Saul that he is too young and untried to be comfortable with the accessories of the professional warrior ("He had not proved them," in the King James translation). This motivation, which stems from the young man's praiseworthy level of self-knowledge, is replaced by a theological motivation when David, defying Goliath in the heat of the fight itself, offers a different reason for appearing unclad: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." Instead of the mature, official weaponry offered by Saul, David takes up his bucolic slingshot and five smooth stones,

with the very first of which he proves himself more powerful than the fearsomely equipped giant. Like the statue, he is naked and minimally armed.

4-20. Michelangelo, drawing, David and Goliath, *Corpus* 370. The Pierpont Morgan Library and Museum, New York

So, when Michelangelo sketches preliminary forms in response to his two recent commissions, and writes, "David with his slingshot, and I with my bow," he is not merely comparing himself to the biblical hero; he is inserting himself in a sequence of heavily moralized ratios. David's slingshot was, to be sure, already an emblem of youth prevailing over age, of the inexperienced recruit prevailing over the battle-seasoned veteran, of individual skill and astuteness trumping a standard-issue conception of how a man should make his way in the world. According to this new, second-order ratio, David is now the established man-of-war with the tried-and-true, canonically brutal weapon—the puny boy has turned into the Goliath-like *gigante*, as it were—and Michelangelo is the ingenue with artfulness, limited equipment, and God on his side.

On the sheet of paper, the (bronze) David with his vividly pendulous slingshot is overmastered by the great arched bow of the (marble) right arm. On the marble statue itself, not only is Goliath chiselled out of the picture—he is, after all, no longer one of the combatants—but the weapon is reduced to the barely visible traces of a slingshot hidden high above the viewer's eye and behind the relatively inconsequential left hand. Only the contents of the statue's cupped right hand are less visible, and these may be one of the smooth stones to be used in felling the giant.[46] If that is the case, the weapon that overmastered the Philistine army has been transformed into the solution for an artistic problem that the sketch

had itself been exploring: how to anchor the free-standing limb of a free-standing sculpture and nail down the wavy *pentimenti* of those fingers. And so if Michelangelo not only composes this figural and proportional boast but also signs his name to it, it is because he is more clearly than ever before (and perhaps ever again) producing a piece of inward self-portraiture in the visual medium. We have to look thirty or forty years into his future to see another act of introspection as complex as this one, but then it will come in words alone. As for pictures, the visual representation that is sealed with the signature "Michelagniolo" on this sheet reduces to absurdity the Academicians' idea that three circles will sum him up.

5
CROWDED SHEETS

In 1502, Michelangelo had only one artistic subject to worry about, which may explain why the page that contains the two Davids, alongside of which he has penned his complex and audacious act of self-presentation, offers a portrait of the artist in what turns out to be a quite straightforward form: two drawings of the same subject, both pointing toward specific commissions; an inscription that names and theorizes that subject; and an identification between the maker and the object that acts as a multi-layered signature. But as soon as that work was finished (or, in the case of the bronze statue, *not* finished), Michelangelo entered upon a period when he was called upon to undertake many different projects concurrently.

It is certainly possible to tell this story so as to emphasize his progress toward some well mapped out goals and, as with the Davids, to read that account of his life on his sketchpad. There are, for instance, a considerable number of drawings, often executed with great care on one side of an otherwise unencumbered sheet, which feature muscular male nudes in a *contrapposto* stance. These sketches clearly derive from Michelangelo's experiences of seeing such canonical classical works as the *Apollo Belvedere*, and they doubtless have something to do with the *David*, even when they were executed after 1504. Other drawings record his interest in the figure of the "younger son" in the *Laocoön* group, discovered in 1506, which offered formal possibilities for a contorted body and upraised arms. Still others relate to what was probably a relief depicting Leda or Ganymede (or both), which emerges in his idiom as a smaller figure placed directly in front of a larger figure. Other antique forms to which he returns on these pages include putti and helmeted heads.[1] In short, there is no doubt that during this period Michelangelo was giving his eyes and his hands a classical education.

The drawings also leave no doubt that Michelangelo was working toward the achievement of certain artistic commissions. We know that the most ambitious project of this period was to depict the Florentine victory at the Battle of Cascina in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio of the Palazzo Vecchio.[2] Our information about the composition is tantalizingly incomplete. But Cascina appears, quite logically, to account for many of the artist's figure sketches in these years, since we know that he planned to represent a moment of violent surprise during a lull before the battle and since he executed many figure sketches representing bodies in tension, any or all of which might form part of the eventual (but never realized) fresco. As for the undertakings that *did* get accomplished during these years, including several Madonnas and the *Doni Tondo*, there are no sketches that point unequivocally toward specific finished work, but there are a number of drawings which show clearly that the artist was working with groupings of bodies that owed something to his observations of Leonardo and that would emerge during these years in his own efforts in marble and pigment.[3]

If, however, we look at the drawings not so much in terms of where they are coming from and where they are going but rather as objects in themselves, we begin to see a moment in Michelangelo's career that is more difficult to describe. David, for all intents and purposes, stood by himself. But once the colossal marble was finished and installed in front of the

Palazzo Vecchio, the artist found himself contemplating a diversity of subject matters, many of which involved a plurality of figures. He needed to invent systems for coordinating such multiplicity, and this endeavor will become a central and recurring problematic in his career. His life on paper, including a couple of dozen sheets that can be dated with some certainty to this period, will abundantly reflect these new circumstances. Indeed, we have only to look at the verso of the David drawings (Figure 5-1),[4] which includes a riot of unidentifiable personages mysteriously tangled together, sketched in several orientations, signalling a project we cannot name, and cohabiting with a few heavily cancelled lines of barely decipherable writing, to see a creative imagination moving in many directions at once.

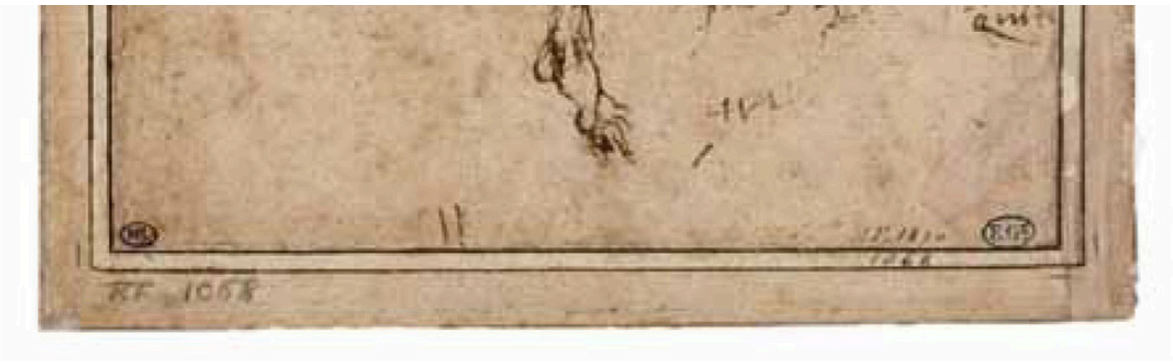
That kind of crowded drafting paper is the subject of this chapter. Throughout this period, what we are going to see on many of the artist's sketch pages is a record of his own experiences of seeing, experiences that are made manifest in a dazzling diversity of inventions. There is in the scholarly literature valuable work relating these visual ideas to particular future projects, but I feel that in the years before Michelangelo's attention is deeply, and problematically, absorbed in the Sistine Ceiling and the Julius Tomb, his penchant for replicating certain kinds of figures—whether he has seen them in sculpture gardens or in the work of his immediate predecessors, or whether he has produced them with human or wax models in the studio—suggests that he is not always working efficiently toward a specifically commissioned end product. We can, to be sure, parcel these drawings amongst various projected Madonnas, or we can anticipate somewhat later undertakings, or we can form conjectures (as many have done) regarding projects for whose existence the only evidence is these very drawings. Alternatively, and on somewhat surer ground, we might ascribe nearly all of them to preparation for the Battle of Cascina; but in my view it is just as reasonable to turn the vector in the other direction and say that Michelangelo spent these years drawing what fascinated him and finally attempted—in ways we cannot fully determine—to invent the composition of the battle cartoon so as to exploit what his eye and hand had for several years been discovering. Whatever directions we wish to travel within this material, we must recognize the remarkable freedom within which Michelangelo was operating; that freedom in turn affords us a special opportunity to look inside his processes of inspiration and composition.

5-1. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 19v. Louvre 714. Louvre, Paris

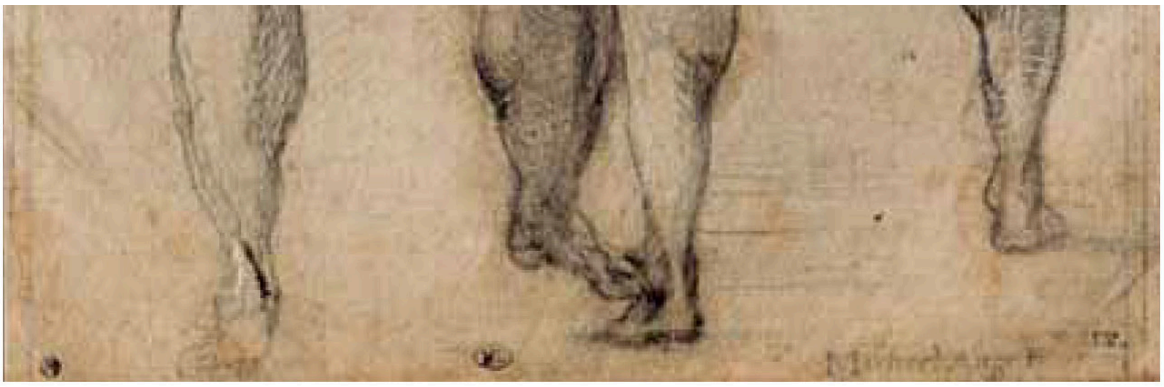
A crucial part of this freedom is the appearance of personal text amidst the busy activity of the drawings. In effect, by some interdependent alchemy, Michelangelo moves from being a

young sculptural genius of limited experience who occasionally composes (or quotes) affecting phrases amidst his drawings to becoming an artist who can project the Julius Tomb, achieve the Sistine Chapel, and simultaneously (if less famously) function as a distinguished vernacular poet. If the previous chapter was about the artist naming himself, we are now ready to consider the subtler ways in which his process of finding and defining himself can be witnessed on paper, in picture and word, during the first decade of the sixteenth century.

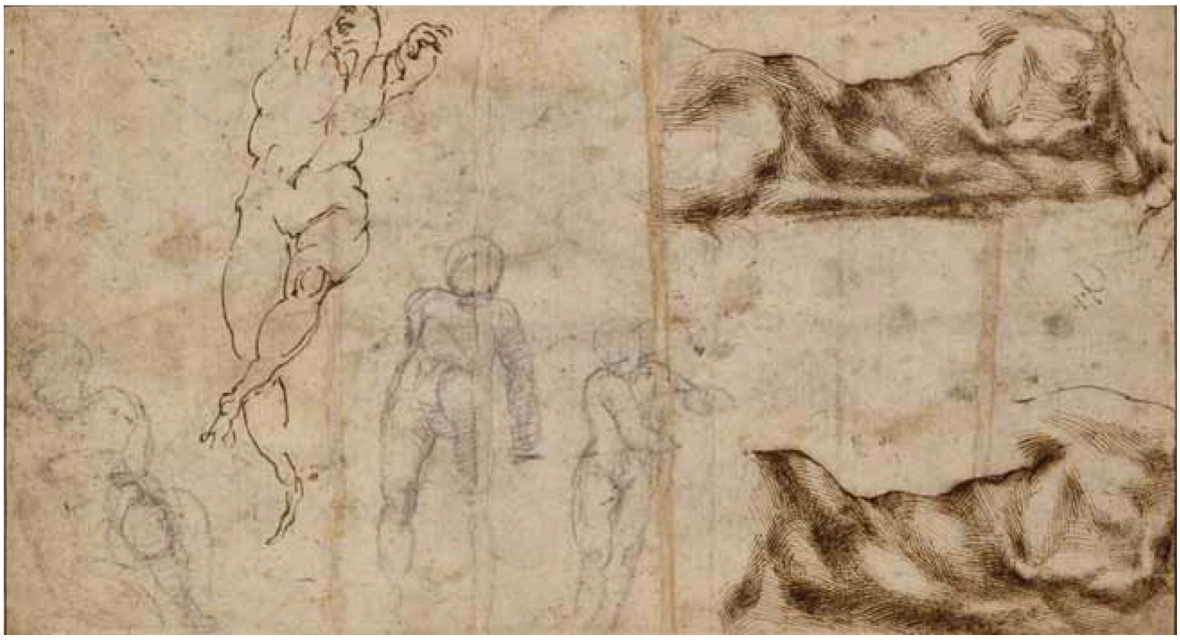
But the story has to begin with drawing, with the ways in which (as on the verso of the David drawings) similar and dissimilar draftsmanly work gets so intimately juxtaposed on the same sheets. In effect, all the multiplicity and seeming randomness that we observed between text and image in Chapter Two finds its counterpart here in the practice of draftsmanship in itself. A Louvre sheet (Figure 5-2), datable ca. 1506, includes two figures that appear quite similar to those on the drawing with the two Davids.[5] Again, they are in pen and ink and in upside-down relation to one another; again, a single limb in the one case is the size of a whole body in the other; and, again, an arc-like space is carved out between them. But, in this case, there is no general agreement as to the eventual destination (if any) of these drawings. The two carefully penned but fragmentary figures are in the company of a tiny caricature-style bearded head that is hastily set down right next to them, while a much more complete figure —one of the *Apollo*-style drawings, also reminiscent of the *Dioscuri*—sits alone in the full space of the recto. A particularly beautiful black chalk version of a three-man triad—another of Michelangelo's habitual compositions in these years—neatly occupies the full recto of another sheet (Figures 5-3, 5-4)[6] whose verso consists of a whole disjunctive spectrum of nudes rendered in various media, including carefully modeled ink, ink outline, and black chalk. They appear in a variety of poses, each of which can be seen passim on other contemporary sheets. A different, but also very finely modeled, black chalk drawing of the same trio[7] (Figures 5-5, 5-6) is laid down on the left side of another sheet, with framing lines to set it off from its surroundings, while, with the paper turned ninety degrees, the artist has composed a Madonna and Child (analogous, in some respects, to the various Leda or Ganymede pairs) with pen and brown ink in the hastiest of outline modes. The verso of that same sheet is even more miscellaneous, with carefully modeled putti and an *écorché* leg in pen and ink on either side of some chalk drawings suggesting male nudes on a large, classicizing scale.



5-2. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 21v. Louvre R. R. 70-1068. Louvre, Paris



5-3. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 47r. Louvre 718. Louvre, Paris



5-4. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 47v. Louvre 718. Louvre, Paris

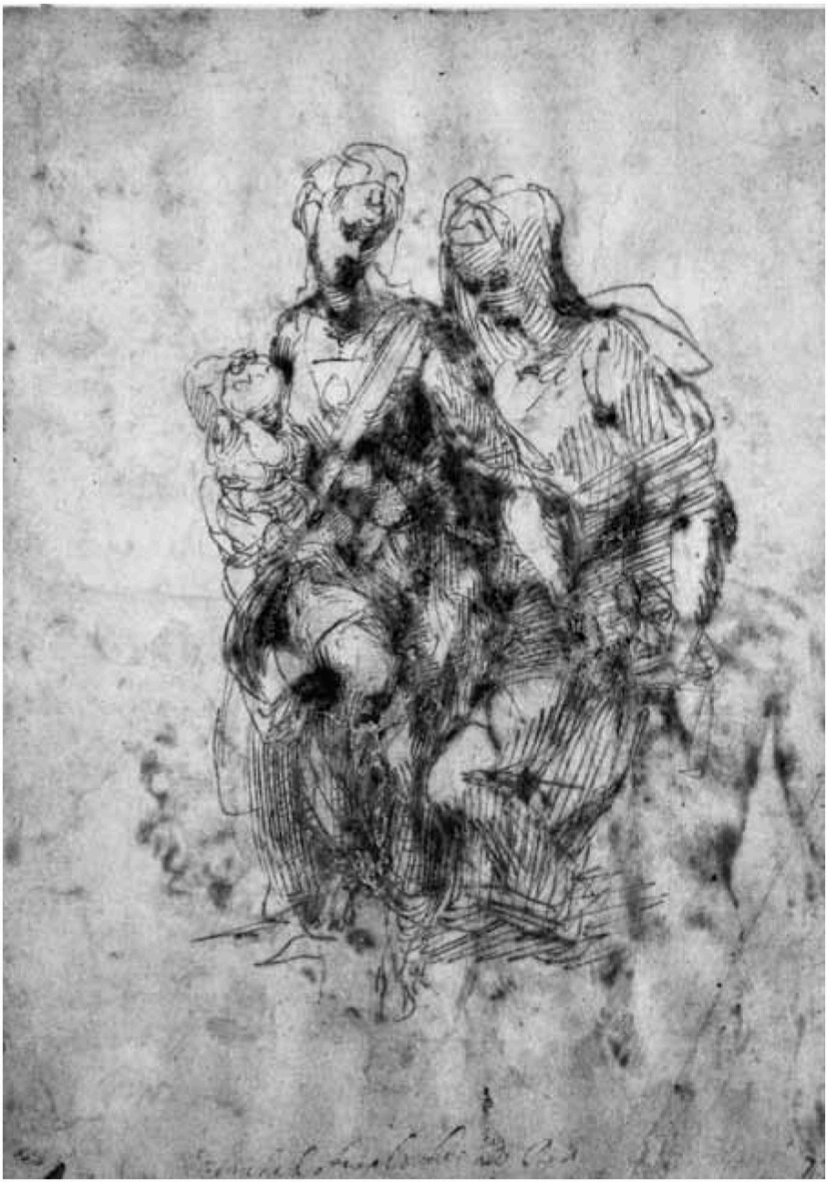
5-5. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 46r. BM 1859-6-25-564. British Museum, London

On some occasions, these separate sketches manage carefully, even with millimeter precision, to keep within their individual spaces. If, for example, one considers the right-angle juxtaposition of chalk and pen endeavors on Figure 5-5, it becomes clear that, whichever work came first (and this may be disputed), the avoidance of overlap is deliberate. Since the sheet in question could in no way have been understood as finished or presentation work, the quarantining of the two drawings must rather indicate that Michelangelo was acutely aware of the earlier work while he was executing the later. In fact, the horizontal lines, which help give the trio of nudes their sense of depth, may have been inserted precisely in response to the pre-existing pen sketch—though, notably, without overwriting even its most minute particular.[8]

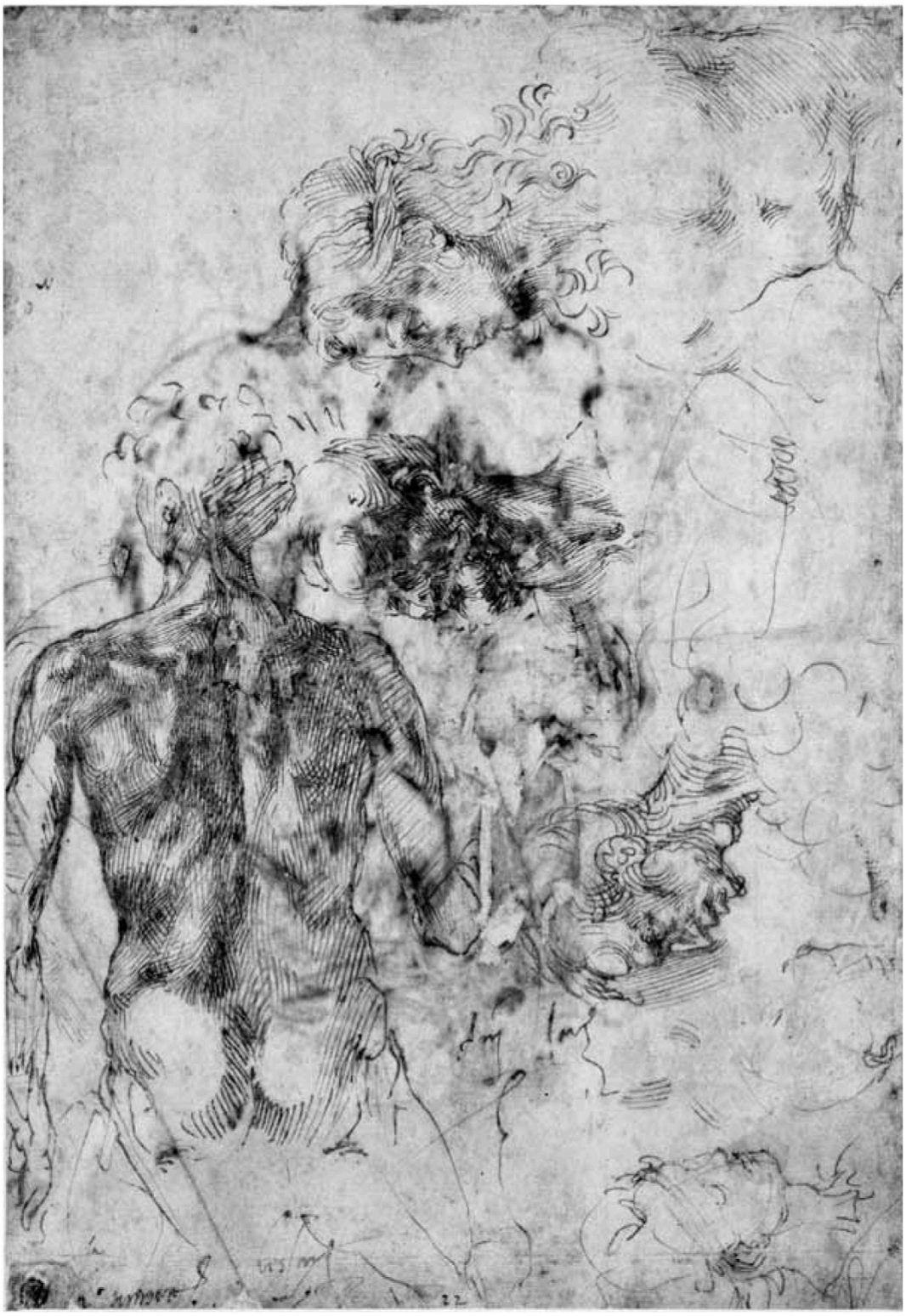
5-6. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 46v. BM 1859-6-25-564. British Museum, London

There are other sheets, to be sure, on which diverse sketches are by no means segregated, a practice that points to a different sort of multiform consciousness on Michelangelo's part. One style of interconnection may be seen on an Ashmolean sheet (Figures 5-7, 5-8)[9] whose recto consists of a single drawing undisturbed by any extraneous sketching, while the verso is devoted to an overlapping of varied efforts. In this case, the recto drawing of the Virgin, Child, and St. Anne, puts us clearly in the territory of Leonardo and, specifically, of Michelangelo's fascination with the ways in which the elder artist composed multiple figures in a tightly interlocking space. This will be a lifelong fascination—and challenge—for Michelangelo, as witness the resemblance between either of the exposed knees in this composition and the problematic leg of the dead Christ in the Florentine *Pietà*

(Figure 5-9), produced some half century later.[10] Perhaps it was the exercise of closely grouping figures in authentic perspectival space, *à la* Leonardo, that led Michelangelo to a different form of multiplicity, in which quite separate sketches are entangled within a mass whose unity is not determined by real space at all but by the will of the artist.



5-7. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 17r. Ashmolean 22. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford



5-8. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 17v. Ashmolean 22. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

5-9. Michelangelo, *Pietà*. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence

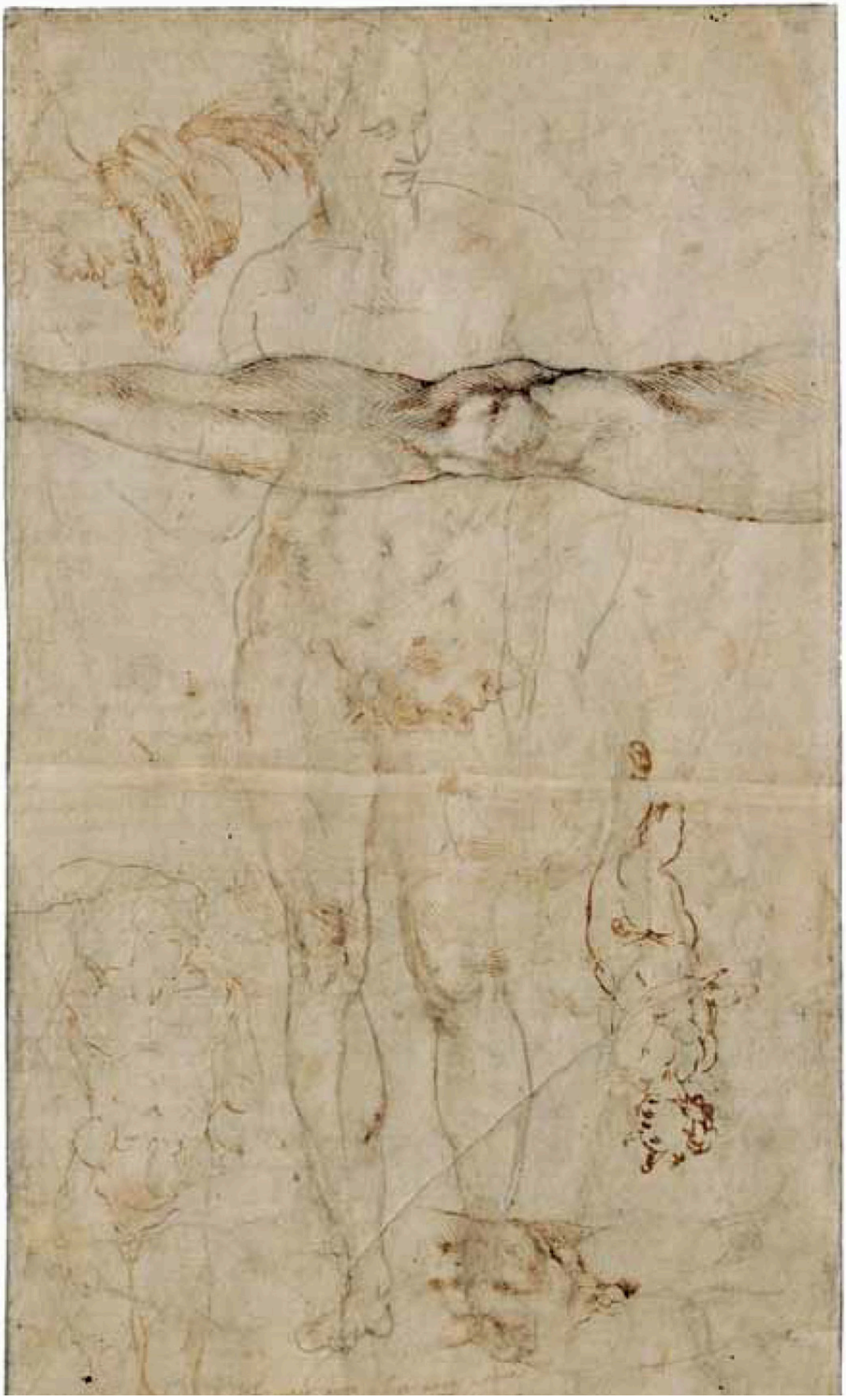
The practice is visible on the verso of this same drawing, where Michelangelo produces a mass of sketching in a triangular shape not so very different from that of the Leonardo-esque triad on the recto, and with a quite similar pattern of pen work. But, on this side of the page, at least two quite incommensurable scenes, drawn in different orientations of the paper, are produced in tight proximity, with a couple of high foreheads butting up (almost literally) against the muscular body of an unrelated figure seen from behind. In an analogous fashion, but with a composition that is even more vertiginous, the verso of the sheet with the two Davids (see Figure 5-1) mixes and matches a set of bodies and body parts, sometimes free-floating and sometimes nestled inside each other, so that at one central point of junction a carefully crosshatched piece of sketching seems to do double duty as the head of one figure and the shoulder of another. Both the compartmentalized and the boundary-less practices of agglomeration signal ways in which the artist is conscious of his past work as he undertakes new work. One set of drawings, whose neighboring forms are kept in isolation, gives evidence of an artist who wishes to preserve distinct representations even while cramming them in tiny spaces, while the other set speaks rather to a vision in which the body is constructed out of

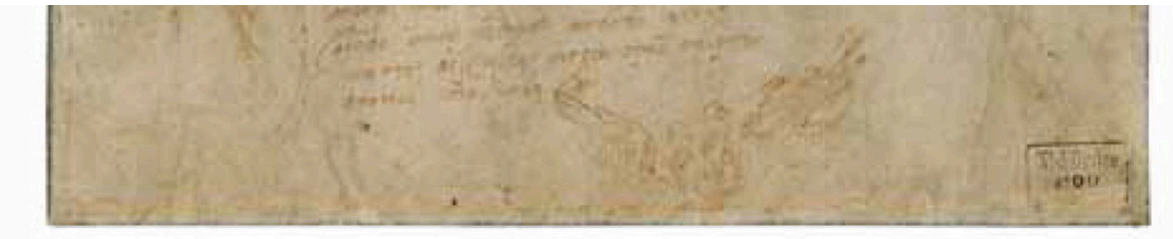
something like building blocks that can be abstracted and recombined in future work like so many pattern book modules.

5-10. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 20r. Louvre 688. Louvre, Paris

In fact, Michelangelo can often be seen oscillating between orderly representation and a kind of visual cacophony. Take the case of another Louvre sheet (Figures 5-10, 5-11),[11] whose recto features an *Apollo Belvedere*-style nude. While the artist did not reuse this side of the sheet for unrelated sketching, he clearly had second thoughts. So the principal figure, whose winged headdress suggests an original designation as Mercury, gets sketchily transformed by the addition of a viol into an Apollo or an Orpheus; there is quite a lot of other afterwork as well, including a complex (if very faintly inked in) cloak and some changes in the right forearm. In addition, another classical figure is added, a fountain-style putto bearing a jug on his shoulders. Whether the two figures are meant to be occupying the same space is difficult to say, but the presence of draperies and shadows, at least around the Apollo figure, gives the drawing the appearance of a scene rather than merely a pair of unrelated bodies.

The verso allows us to entertain no such suppositions of unity. To begin with, Michelangelo produced a tracing of the recto's principal figure. We can take this already as a sign of what we might call a reproductive relation among drawings. The full-body muscular male nude, as we have seen, is a favorite subject on the artist's sketch paper during this period; from its origins in rediscovered antiquities, it generates sequences of new forms. In this case, Michelangelo has produced an Apollo on the recto that is beautifully finished in a number of ways but also awash in *pentimenti*: looking at him, we are, in effect, observing a process of artistic decision-making over a period of time, though whether measured in minutes or weeks we have no way of knowing. That the tracing was done after the recto had reached most or all of its full present form is clear from the bent elbow on our left and the broadened space of the arm on our right. Thus, when Michelangelo takes the pristine verso page and traces the recto figure that he has been working and re-working, he is essentially producing a clean, abstracted, and reproduceable version of his latest intentions. He is also, in a more obvious sense, reversing the figure, which is itself another kind of reproduction. Elsewhere, on the recto of a sheet whose verso we have already considered (Figure 5-12 [for the verso, see 5-2]), he draws another such nude that shares this figure's head, torso, and legs in their reversed position, while his (barely visible) bent arm appears unreversed. The verso of that sheet, in fact, includes a detached arm in just the position of one of the faintly suggested arms on the recto—which may suggest a yet more intricate set of possibilities for reading through the page.





5-11. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 20v. Louvre 688. Louvre, Paris

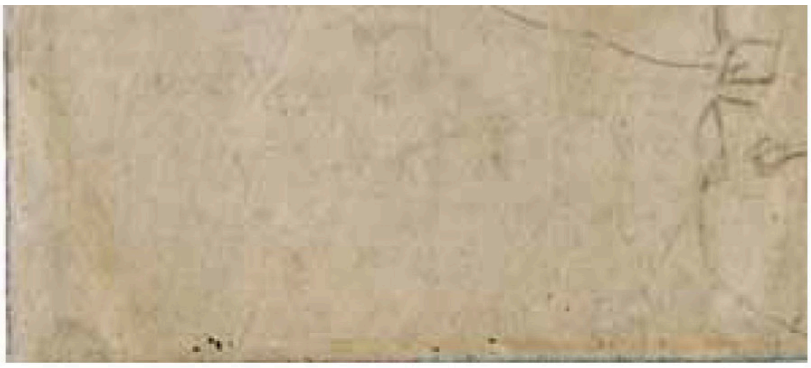
5-12. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 21r. Louvre R. R. 70-1068. Louvre, Paris

If all this back-to-front production suggests its own form of orderliness, the rest of Figure 5-11 cancels that impression. Crowded into less than a square foot of space, there are no fewer than nine additional drawings executed either with black chalk or various forms of pen and ink, or both, and in all four possible orientations of the page.[12] With the tracing in upright position, Michelangelo drew a figure reminiscent of the Louvre *Slaves* (see Figures 8-3, 8-4) with an upraised arm produced in quick outline as well as a lightly hatched winged putto head. Turning the page ninety degrees to the right (Figure 5-13), we find a finely drawn male midsection with the suggestion of an upper body and legs; in a similar style, he sketches a profile head and beneath it another, possibly similar head so faint that even its medium is difficult to determine. With the next turn (Figure 5-14), we can see a putto, complete to the ankles, in ink outline, its posture reminiscent, again, of the *Laocoön* younger son, and (virtually invisible in what is now the lower left corner) a reclining figure, perhaps in the style of a river god. The final turning (Figure 5-15) gives us a heavily outlined left leg and a bearded man wearing an elaborately plumed hat, both very carefully drawn in ink.

5-13. Detail of another orientation of Figure 5-11

How shall we understand this remarkable palimpsest? In one sense, we are seeing a dizzying range of inventions, while in another it is clear that many of these fragments are recurrent efforts to sketch a sampling of particular body parts—torso, arm, profile head—that appear on many other contemporary sheets. Then, in a third sense, whether we emphasize similarity or difference among these images, we can only wonder at their all but monstrous interrelation. A giant leg traverses a torso while a smaller torso blots out an ankle, one man's feathered hat tickles another man's headdress, a face nuzzles testicles: such readings of this ensemble may be absurdly literalist. But, however we reconstruct the act of drawing, pursuing

the sequence from a three-dimensional real-world sight to a drafts-manly idea to a set of lines inscribed on a page to a completed representation that the maker himself may now observe in such a way as to proceed onward with his art, it is impossible to imagine any stage in the production of any single drawing that is not affected, or perhaps even necessitated, by all the competing visual presences.



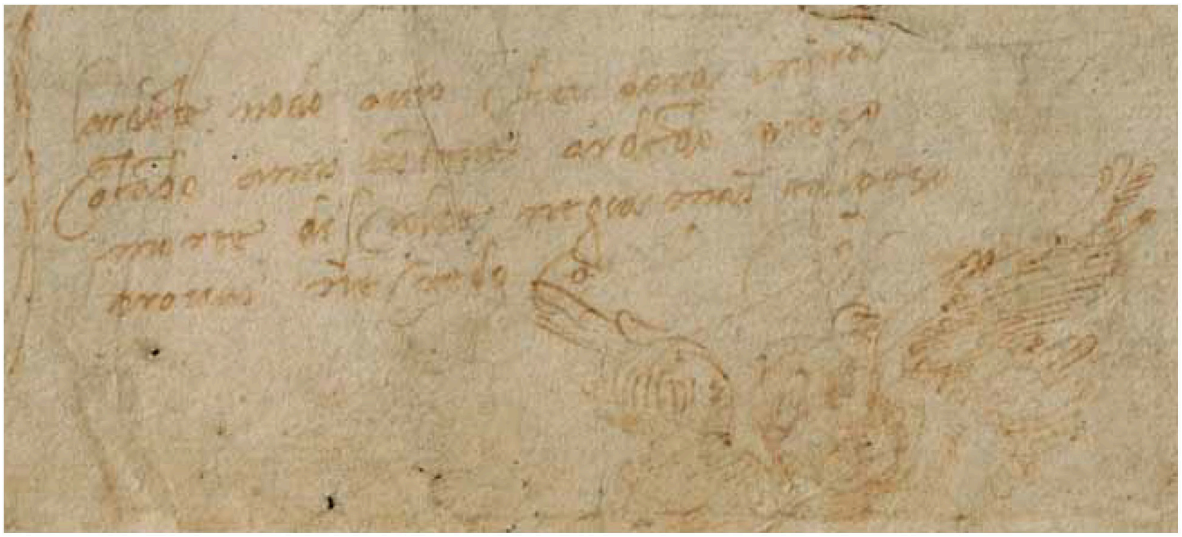
5-14 and 5-15. Details of other orientations of Figure 5-11

Which brings us to what is perhaps the most surprising set of markings on the sheet, inscribed (probably after everything else, though we cannot be certain) in one of the few undisturbed bits of space (Figure 5-16). The words appear in a quite elegant handwriting:

L'ardente nodo ov'io fu' d'ora in ora,
contando anni ventuno ardendo preso,
morte disciolse; ne già mai tal peso

provai, ne credo co' . . .

Death dissolved the burning knot in which I had been bound hour upon hour, held burning for a space of twenty-one years; never before had I experienced such a burden, nor do I believe that . . .



5-16. Detail of Figure 5-11

It is an almost verbatim rendering of Petrarch's *Rime* 271, referring to the poet's love relation with Laura that has ended in her death.[13] The sonnet goes on, in a rather curious vein, to announce the death of another woman whom the speaker loved (an episode referred to nowhere else in the sequence, except perhaps in the immediately preceding canzone), with the strong implication that his grief over Laura has had the beneficial effect of diminishing his suffering the second time around. But Michelangelo breaks off just before the poem moves in that direction, and his quotation is the more interesting because his one mistake, "anni ventuno *ardendo*" for "anni ventuno *interi*," brings the text in line with a different instance of Petrarch counting the years of his love, in *Rime* 364.[14] Paradoxically, it is Michelangelo's misquotation that corroborates his deep familiarity—as the contemporary biographers attest[15]—with the Petrarchan poetic corpus.

But what are the words doing *here*? In order to answer that question, we need to go back to linguistic expressions that are far less semantically rich than a Petrarch quatrain. In fact, Michelangelo scribbles bits of often quite fragmentary text throughout the sketchbook of this period. The full map of his writing here would have to include the repeated presence of the letters *Am*, possibly related to the appearance of the words *Amicho* or *Amore* elsewhere; it would face the quandary why the word *barba* should be written next to a figure who is decidedly unbearded (see below, Figure 5-20); it would have to settle the question whether *Alessandro*, *signor Alessandro*, and *lessandro manecti* refer to the same person and, if so, why the artist kept writing down his name; it would have to offer a satisfying reading of the inscription *Leardo* (see above, Figure 5-8), which may refer to Leonardo, whose influence is evident in the drawings on the same sheet, or it may refer to the artist's brother, or it may just mean "spotted."[16]

These fragments of text are probably best seen not as detachable bits of code but as traces of the daily work routine in the artist's studio, all of which, taken together, constitute

stages in the process of invention. We can glimpse that process, including both image and text, on a Hamburg drawing (Figure 5-17). Its separate sketches appear almost random enough to resemble one of those pages on which Master and pupils have variously produced exercises, though I follow the preponderance of the experts in believing that everything here is autograph and that it was produced before Michelangelo had such pupils.[17] All the crowded fragmentation on the page should not obscure the fact that there is a good deal of extraordinarily careful and polished penwork here as well. Everything has been executed with the sheet held in the same direction, which suggests a set of undertakings that are, in one way or another, closely interrelated. The helmeted head, a frequent subject of sketching in this period, is here treated to one of its most imaginative and exquisite realizations.[18] Even more polished are the various facial features, where we see the artist using the technique of hatching with breathtaking mastery. Much could be said about Michelangelo's relation to crosshatching—its origins in his training under Ghirlandaio; its relationship to other modes of drawing, such as modeling in chalk; its connection to the uses of light and dark in painting or to chisel strokes in sculpting.[19] On this sheet, we see him in the process of putting his own new stamp on the technique. And that, I think, is why the space contains not only these beautiful fragments but also so many groups of apparently unremarkable pen lines devoid of any representational shape. This is a sheet, in other words, defined not by a project, or set of projects, but rather by the perfecting of a technique. If such exquisitely formed lips and ears are keeping company with so many ordinary stretches of parallel ink lines, it is because Michelangelo is studying the relationship between the purely geometric operation of the pen and the magic whereby it can use these lines as a two-dimensional mode of representing three-dimensional bodies.

5-17. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 35r. Inv. 21094. Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany

So far as the writing is concerned, it is not possible to identify *Antonio*, *Signo S Alessandro*, or the *Amicho*. We cannot guess what exactly is "not needed" (*No besognia*), nor, in regard to "Dolcie mie caro . . ." can we say anything more than that Michelangelo is once again inscribing lines from Petrarch's sonnets about Laura's death (*Rime* 340, this time[20]). But just as the images here are not parts of a sustained narrative strand destined for eventual artistic realization, I think that the writing, though it doubtless reflected some momentary free association, is motivated by a wish to exercise the pen rather than to construct discourse.[21] After all, every act of writing needs to be understood as both a discursive and a physical endeavor; here Michelangelo is operating in the overlapping space between the making of letters and the making of images. The elongated penmanship is itself a version of the proto-mannerist shapes in the drawing; and, at several points, the text is interspersed with pen strokes (e.g., after the elaborate "C" of *Amicho*) that seem to be abstracting the alphabet. Letters begin to act as constituent parts of the crosshatched designs that were Michelangelo's main reason for returning to this page.

But, to return to Figure 5-16, a whole chunk of Petrarch, even if slightly garbled, signals something different. The text of *Rime* 271 is itself rich in associative significance. Even the very young Michelangelo, it turns out, is highly conscious of time, aging, and death. Not only is he focusing on the later sonnets of Petrarch, composed after Laura's demise (as was also demonstrated by "Rotta è l'alta colonna . . . " on the David sheet), but, in mixing up the two poems and repeating *ardere*, his memory is creating its own filing system to flag a particular

kind of passionately melancholy retrospection. Michelangelo, aged approximately thirty, could not possess twenty-one years worth of erotic memories; Petrarch provides them vicariously.

This is to extract the words from their physical context, however. The real issue is not just their meaning to Michelangelo but their presence on this crowded page. Everything on the sheet is a fragment, and this condition must be understood not merely in the negative sense, as a shortcoming, but also in the positive sense, as a condition for the further exercise of the artistic imagination. When we repeatedly see truncated or disjointed efforts at drafting body parts, we may conclude that Michelangelo is confronting challenges—aesthetic, technical, psychological—in regard to these pieces of representation. When he plucks lines from his reading memory, begins to transcribe them, and then breaks off between "nor do I believe that man . . ." and ". . . can die of grief," we have every reason to recognize a similar kind of process.

In this instance, he seems fixated on the therapeutic effects of sorrow, the paradoxical consequence of which is that he prefers to embrace grief rather than to recover from it. But this sequence of verbal associations cannot provide the sort of linear path toward a final product, like the battle of Cascina, that is parallel to the model we apply when we line up pictorial sketches with finished products. Let us say that Michelangelo has set down all these markings, visual and verbal, because of something that has previously existed in his mind and that he now wishes to inscribe on paper, so as to endow it with a reality that can speak back to him. A crowded verso like this gives evidence that on occasion this reality needed to be intensely, even cacophonously, super-charged. Nor is this material limited to the visual realm. The work of Petrarch, and along with it the whole logocentric body of both sacred and secular discourse that Michelangelo had absorbed so intensely in his young life, is another kind of phenomenological reality that lies in the prehistory of his artistic creations. And this material needed to undergo a metamorphic process of creative fragmentation and incongruous juxtaposition analogous to that through which visible, plastic reality was channeled. In some way, the artist's act of ventriloquizing the middle-aged, love-lorn Petrarch, a role for which he was by normal standards of life not well suited, seems to be of a piece with all the other personal refashioning that would enable a young and inexperienced sculptor to realize ambitions that were larger than life-size. To make the art he purposed to make, not only did he have to solve the problems of heads and torsos and develop his own relation to the *Laocoön* and the *Apollo Belvedere*; he also needed to take on the persona of someone who could reflect on a lifetime of suffering and the imminence of death.

Quite often, and in the company of similarly multiple and elusive sketches, the words are not Petrarch's but Michelangelo's own. Let us consider a Louvre sheet (Figure 5-18)[22] whose verso, as has been noted in Chapter Two, indicates that the artist was recycling a page from a family record book dating back some hundred years before he began to do his elaborate and heavily crosshatched sketching on it. In fact, confronted with what appears to have been one previously used and one clean side of the sheet, he ended up producing far more polished efforts of draftsmanship on the side with the ancient accounting notations than on the *tabula rasa*. The subjects that he does consign to what we now call the recto, drawn in black chalk and pen with two colors of ink, are all typical for this period in his work; but, in contrast to the verso, they exhibit a remarkable range as regards their states of completeness. The muscular male nude in the style of classical sculpture appears in bare outline, while the faun's head squeezed into a nearby space seems the merest of caricatures. The most significant figures on the sheet—the trio of Virgin, Child, and St. Anne—are distinguished by ever diminishing quantities of penwork as one moves from left to right. Unlike, say, the Hamburg sheet with its exquisite crosshatching and graceful calligraphy, this page appears to be a site of invention

rather than of technique. And it is indeed apparent, at least so far as the holy trio is concerned, that the artist is attempting some quite original iconographic moves (e.g., the hand gestures of both Virgin and Child) that operate within an imaginative space that looks back to Leonardo's triangular compositions and forward to the various sacred groupings—ranging from the Bruges Madonna to the Pitti and Doni tondos—that Michelangelo was in the process of executing in marble and pigment during this same period.

5-18. *(facing)* Michelangelo, *Corpus* 26r. Louvre 685. Louvre, Paris

Given the somewhat miscellaneous efforts at draftsmanship here, it is perhaps not surprising that the handwriting shows no signs of elegance either. Yet the content is highly suggestive:

Di pensier

Chi dire mai chella f. . . di mie mani

Di pensier in pensier imp . . .

Laudate parvo[li] *. . . La*[udate] *Signor nostro*

[Lau]*date sempre*

Three quite different strands appear in these very few inscriptions. Once again, Petrarch is cited—though, for once, not a work written after Laura's death, but rather one of the most often quoted of all the *Rime*, usually called the *canzone montagnina* (*Rime* 129). This poem is the epicenter for the trope of a mirroring relationship between the lover's agonized mental state and the natural world in which he is sentenced to solitary wandering:

Di pensier in pensier, di monte in monte
mi guida Amor, ch'ogni segnato calle
provo contrario a la tranquilla vita.

From thought to thought, from mountain to mountain
Love leads me on, since every trodden pathway
I experience as contrary to a peaceful life.

Quite separate from this text are the words of what appears to be a prayer, probably deriving from the oft-quoted words of Jesus that only as little children can we enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18: "nisi efficamini . . . sicut parvuli non intrabitis in regnum caelorum"). Finally, there is the segment of writing that cannot be so readily connected to a canonical origin, roughly, "Who would say that she . . . by my hand . . . ."

In sum, one piece of writing that is a direct quotation of famous poetic lines; one piece of writing whose ultimate source is equally famous but which has been fashioned into a particular idiom—prayer—that is shaped by pre-existing liturgical forms, and yet at the same time intensely personal; and one piece of writing that belongs spontaneously to the voice of this speaker at this moment. This sequence of speech acts is best understood on a kind of continuum. The impulse to compose words next to sketches without any obvious connection between them arises, to begin with, because the artist has so much pre-formed discourse in his head; in effect, he thinks in these semantic units. Dante and Petrarch provide one medium through which he can give shape to his thoughts—essentially through verbatim transcription. Liturgy and prayer operate somewhat more flexibly: they offer countless verbal and syntactical paradigms (often sliding across the quite permeable boundary between Latin and Italian), but they may be altered to suit individual or momentary sentiment expressing personal interiority.

What characterizes both of these constitutive discourses is the possession of authority. This may be of the poetic kind, which is to say the authority of the canonical text and of the culture that it helps define; or it may be of the religious kind, which is characterized by a faith that, when language is formed properly as prayer, it is capable of being transcendently efficacious, of actually performing that which it asserts. So, to return to a drawing that we have

considered only in regard to its pictorial elements, when Michelangelo holds the sheet in one direction (Figure 5-19) and writes *Raccoglietele al pie del tristo ciesto* ("Gather them [i.e., the leaves that represent the souls] up at the foot of the wretched bush"), we have every reason to speculate on why he should be thinking about this passage in the *Inferno* (13.142); might it be, for example, that the embodied or disembodied nature of the suicides somehow impacts the work of the sculptor who fashions human likenesses in marble? Similarly, when we observe that he held the sheet in the other direction (see Figure 5-2) and wrote something like *Omo dio tu sei in pensier* ("Man god you are in thought"), we can speculate that he was searching within himself, or even perhaps within his artistic creations, for the essential divine spark. But underlying both of these assertions, one poetic and the other prayerful, is the search for a kind of authority, perhaps one that will complement the search for authority implicit in the act of holding a pen and attempting to fashion an image of man that is itself fashioned after the image of God.

5-19. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 21v, inverted in relation to Figure 5-2

The sheet with these two inverse inscriptions contains only what is essentially borrowed language. It may be even more important, though, to consider an utterance like *Chi dire mai chella f… di mie mani* on Figure 5-18 because here, it seems to me, Michelangelo is building his own capacity to make assertions. The text is highly elliptical, in part precisely because we cannot fill in the blanks; Michelangelo is not quoting pre-existing writing. But it may well be, as others have argued (and as I would love to believe) that, in placing these words next to a highly original sketch that takes Leonardo's inventions into new territory, Michelangelo is marvelling at the capacity of his own hands to produce such great work. If that is true, it is a moment that deserves to be placed next to the episode about his signing his name on the St. Peter's *Pietà*[23] because of his great satisfaction with it, in which case *Che dire mai . . .* amounts to another such signature.

In the same vein, we might consider yet another sheet from this period (Figure 5-20)[24] with the ink drawing of yet another classical male nude; to the left of the figure, with the page turned ninety degrees and in black chalk, Michelangelo has written, *Ero ignudo or son vestito ogni mal me* ("I was naked now I am clothed, every evil to me . . ."). The sentence is even more oblique than *Che dire mai . . .* , and it is particularly difficult to guess in what direction *ogni mal* might be going. But, in its own way, *ero ignudo or son vestito*, next to a drawing that quite faithfully imitates the (nude) *Apollo Belvedere* may represent the same sort of identification between the artist and his material that we were able to observe more fully in *Davide colla fromba*. As we saw in the previous chapter, such self-assertions cannot be made by picture alone; they necessitate language. It may be clear that Michelangelo's ability to make that discursive and personal breakthrough is due in part to his long engagement in such other, more echoic operations of language as the quoting of Petrarch or the exercise of prayer. Without the practice of art, however, he cannot reach the condition that calls forth these assertions; and without the practice of language, he cannot signal that he has reached them.

5-20. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 48r. BM 1887-5-2-117. British Museum, London

There is one further step further in this process; to understand it, we must turn to yet another sheet (Figures 5-21, 5-22) that was put to strikingly diverse purposes.[25] The drawings on the recto consist of a cavalry battle sketched in brilliantly suggestive outline, almost certainly bearing some relation to the decorations for the Sala del Maggior Consiglio. If that is the case, it is not related to the Cascina episode of the bathing soldiers who were roused by their captain's intentional false alarm—which clearly became the principal component of this commission—but rather to Leonardo's *Battle of the Standard* (Figure 5-23), slated to appear in the same room as the Cascina[26]; in that event, we are witnessing yet another response by Michelangelo to his elder contemporary. With the sheet turned ninety degrees (though, as usual, the order of composition is unclear), the artist drew two versions of a profile figure

(Figure 5-24), one barely sketched in but with a heavy external outline, and the other much more fully realized with considerable crosshatching. These are almost certainly connected to another early project, the twelve statues of the Apostles to be placed in the Duomo. The drawings on the verso, apart from a few barely visible stick figures, consist of various studies for some elaborately fantastical capitals, conceivably intended for the Julius Tomb or the house that was being built for the artist while he produced the twelve apostles, though we have no other document to establish those connections. In short, one effort aimed at sculpture, one at fresco painting, and one (conceivably) at architecture, but with the sheet repeatedly rotated and the drawing full of overlaps and *pentimenti*. Not to mention the fact that, in the long run, the whole sheet is a monument to the *non finito*: Cascina never went further than the cartoon; the apostle project, with the absurd stipulation of one large marble statue per year, was left in abeyance when half of one-twelfth of the work was done[27]; and the capitals give every sign of having had no firm destination at all.

5-21 and 5-22. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 36r,v. BM 1895-9-15-496. British Museum, London

5-23. Peter Paul Rubens, copy after Leonardo, *Battle for the Standard*. Louvre, Paris

5-24. *Corpus* 36r in another orientation

This state of uncertainty and fragmentation is, once again, the context for reading the words that appear on both sides of the sheet. With the recto page in the orientation of the battle scene, the artist has written something like *dolore stanza nellinferno* (roughly, "pain residing in hell")[28] and *dio devotamente* ("god piously"). With the page in the same orientation as the Apostle, he has written, *Deus in nomine* | *tuo salvum me fac* ("Save me, O Lord, by thy name"). Two of the statements, both in Italian, are composed in the same orientation, but there is considerable intervening space. All three of them together (though not in a uniform language and not, perhaps, written at the same time) neatly frame the Apostle drawing, which seems to have been produced with the same kind of pen and ink. Once again, Michelangelo's verbal mode is quotation and prayer: the Latin is taken from Psalm 53, while the Italian may be glancing at Dante and is in any event some sort of pious monologue. It is impossible to determine for sure in what sequence these texts and the heavily crosshatched version of the Apostle were inscribed on the sheet, but there can be no doubt that by the end of the process they grew into some form of semantic unit. It may be as

straightforward as the set of connections proposed by Frederick Hartt, who noticed that *Domine, salvum me fac*, quoted from the Psalms, is what St. Peter said to Christ at Matthew 14:30 and proposed that *nellinferno* could be associated with St. Peter as well.[29] Given that Michelangelo was working on statues of the apostles, Hartt concluded that the figure inside this frame of text was a sketch for a St. Peter. For me, this turns the writing on the drawings into something a little too much like a cartoon balloon. In effect, I find it less characteristic that St. Peter should be speaking here than that it is the artist himself who is voicing his monologue.

As in so many other cases, it is a cryptic monologue. Not only are the various phrases quite elliptical; they are also accompanied by an equally interesting set of even more oblique verbal gestures, the several non-signifying groups of letters beginning with "d" and ending with something like "l"; in addition to which, we have the elaborate squiggle in the space between the words and the apostle. Michelangelo has attempted to write what appear to be the same letters several times without forming them into a word. Nearby he has also written a meaningful but highly oblique phrase beginning with the same letter *d—dio devotamente*—and, in similar proximity, composed a phrase that might have begun with *dolore*, which would also relate to the practice letters. In effect, Michelangelo is producing writing here exactly as he produces pictures, that is, by generating it out of repeated analogous shapes that do not always resolve themselves into completed signifiers. Which suggests that writing and drawing are capable of existing for the artist not only as opposites and even not only as terms of comparison, but rather as neighbors on a continuum of creation. The squiggle acts as the point where the signifying letter and the representational image meet; with these various doodles, Michelangelo finds a similar point of encounter between the forming of the letter *d*, the naming of God, and the expression of his own sorrows.

Of course, *God* and *devotion* and *suffering* are not just *d* words, not just the products of a loop at the end of a line; they are heavily weighted semantic terms. And every one of the statements on this side of the paper, lucid or not, is theologically significant. They appear to embody the kind of faith in which individual believers place themselves inside the ultimate dramas of Christian belief. This form of religious experience—so intense and spontaneous in Michelangelo's case that it produces calligraphic stuttering rather than the kind of orderly verbal composition of which we have seen him frequently capable—has a long history in connection with meditation upon icons. Indeed, it should come as no surprise that Michelangelo would instinctively embrace the model of private worship in the presence of a representation that was understood to be both artistically crafted and tinged with some reflected sacredness. That, I think, starts to locate these words in relation to the adjacent drawing.

The project of the twelve sculpted apostles was problematic not only because Michelangelo couldn't work fast enough. The Duomo plan would have placed these oversized figures in niches high above the level of the individual worshipper, which, in effect, opened up a fatal gap between the artist's own spirituality and the terms of this commission. One manifestation of that problem is the vexing question concerning the body positions that the artist had in mind for these figures.[30] Most of the few relevant drawings, including those on this very sheet, have led scholars to the perplexing conclusion that Michelangelo was going to stage the apostles in something like profile, thus burying them even further into their niches and impeding easy view. The recent identification of a Louvre drawing, where the apostle is to be seen head-on (Figure 5-25), has enabled scholars to posit an installation that would be more effective in regard to the visibility of his future apostle's faces.[31] Still, in none of these preparatory figures—including the Louvre drawing and, indeed, the half-finished *St. Matthew*

statue itself—do the apostles appear to communicate in any direct way with the viewer. In fact, the drawing that sits in the company of these elliptical phrases is especially inner-directed. I would argue that Michelangelo's vision of these figures as facing away is fundamental to the way he imagines the architectural project for which he has been commissioned, and I think it demonstrates what we might call his maladaptation to the whole venture—as does, of course, the fact that by the time the project had completely shut down in 1508 he had produced only one twenty-fourth of the work.

In fact, Michelangelo's faith, his artistic vision of these statues, and the words that he writes on the page stand in a complex relationship. Figures like these, whose faces are shadowed and whose expressive abilities would be further occluded by their installation in the Duomo, find their ancestry in one of the most often repeated exempla from the mythic history of ancient art that was so studiously re-read and re-enacted in the Renaissance. When painting the Sacrifice of Iphigenia, the artist Timanthes depicted the anguish of all her family members in a rising crescendo until he arrived at her father; then, instead of rendering that portrait as the climax of suffering, he chose to veil Agamemnon's face.[32] For commentators from Pliny to Cicero to Quintilian to Alberti, this is a rich paradox that speaks to a variety of issues about artistic restraint, about the visual power of the invisible, and about the ways an artist engages the viewer's imagination. As in so many of these stories, what begins with visual artists is soon (or indeed instantly) transposed to the realm of writing. Timanthes' *Iphigenia* becomes, in effect, a parable not about the *unshown* but about the *unsaid*.

5-25. Michelangelo, drawing detached from *Corpus* 36. Louvre 12 691. Louvre, Paris

Generally, the verdict on these operations of the veil is a positive one. For an author to renounce a climactic utterance in this way is to recognize that language has limits and that the deepest truths must lie hidden; it means engaging in a trope like *aposiopesis*,[33] whereby speech is interrupted, sometimes in favor of a signifying silence more eloquent than what words can convey. Michelangelo was doubtless capable of these *in bono* readings at certain times and places. But here, I think, the veil is all about absence. There is nothing he can do to

make the apostles speak, and their silence is deafening to him. As a result, he feels sentenced to turn their faces, or at least their eyes, from his own view, and that of the future congregants. He also finds it necessary to fill that empty space with speech of his own, however irrelevant it may become in the final reckoning. *Save me O Lord*; *suffering in hell*; *god devotedly*: all this Christian eschatology in the Dantean mode occupies some indeterminate space where the apostles are trying to speak to Christ and Michelangelo is trying to speak to the apostles; and where, especially, God and Michelangelo's art will speak back to him.

Of course, no statue, with or without a visible face, could utter any of these words, and I think this frustration animates Michelangelo's *cri de coeur* as much as does his theological anxiety. In effect, Michelangelo has not transferred the Timanthes story from the visual to the verbal; he has kept it in the uncomfortable space where the two discourses are at odds with each other. To the painter-sculptor looking enviously across the aisle at writers, Timanthes is not to be applauded for his restraint but to be pitied for the limitations of his medium; if only the painted Agamemnon had words at his disposal, he would not need to be veiled. But, in the absence of language, all images may as well be veiled.

With this question of communication in mind, we can now consider the verso. The visual materials, as we have already suggested, are even more miscellaneous than those on the recto. Whether or not Michelangelo envisioned some future decorative scheme with masks or birds or vegetation, such as appears among the various versions and *pentimenti* on this sheet, it is clear that at this moment he is engaging in something like an open-ended creative process. And he executes these *capricci*, which do not always have a logical top or bottom, by holding the sheet in three of the four possible orientations. He also held the sheet in the fourth direction, though not for sketching (Figure 5-26). One quarter of the page is occupied by a piece of text that is wholly different from anything we have so far seen in this chapter. The handwriting is elegant, and the space consigned to it is unencumbered by any of the drawing that fills the rest of the surface. The words consist of a handsome quatrain of verses with ABBA rhyme and, after a break, another pair of lines whose rhymes, BA, suggest that they are the latter half of the second quatrain; the distance between the first four and the last two lines would precisely accommodate a space between stanzas and the two missing lines that would complete the second quatrain.

5-26. *Corpus* 36v in another orientation

Before considering what it is that these lines say, we must take note of the fact that in themselves they represent a momentous step. Michelangelo, as we learn from both contemporary biographies, was drastically uninterested in the arts of language when he was a schoolboy: "in tutto abbandonò le lettere," says Condivi of his grammar school failure.[34] In a previous chapter, considering a sheet where some of the writing dates as early as 1501, we observed him quoting Petrarch and writing, in a single (rhyming) line of what is apparently his own composition, "la voglia invoglia e llasa poi la doglia." In a similar fashion, throughout the present and the previous chapter, we have seen on numerous sheets of his drawing paper dating from this same first decade of the century all sorts of utterances in what we might call a poetic mode. But it is a big step from "Davicte colla fromba e io coll'arco" or "Ero ignudo or son vestito," however densely interpretable such phrases may be, to the verbal, metric, and spatial demands of producing a sonnet. True, the "Renaissance Man" (a decidedly modern invention) was supposed to be versatile, and other individuals whose fame is primarily non-

literary, like Lorenzo de' Medici and Raphael, also wrote poetry. But we should nonetheless not take for granted the fact that at some point during the period of the Duomo Apostles and Cascina (say, in 1503 or 1504) Michelangelo made the great leap from linguistic exercises to poetic composition: from quoting Petrarch, or shaping his emotions into prayer-like language, or permitting his spirit occasionally to move him into oblique or metaphorical forms of expression, to actively channeling his own voice into the rigorous demands of poetry.

Not that the leap is likely to have taken place suddenly and on this particular sheet of paper. The writing here is too clean for that to have been probable, though it is apparent from the arrangement of these lines that this is a work in progress rather than a fair copy of something that was fully drafted elsewhere. Looking to the future, we know that by the end of the decade, when the Sistine Ceiling is well underway and Michelangelo is lamenting the labor in a comic verse letter, he will be capable of quite elaborate poetic efforts. Further along in his life, his poetic work will be circulated, anthologized, collected, and extensively analyzed. What we see on this sheet, however, is the liminal moment: on one side, radically truncated sentiments that were meant for himself alone; on the other side, structured, rhyming verses. No one, I would hazard to say, struggles with the second BA of ABBA without imagining a readership beyond himself. And the fact that this struggle is signaled by the gap among the sketches on this sheet must indicate to us that the language on Michelangelo's drawing pages will not necessarily always be squeezed in among more important visual material; rather, there will be occasions on which it is capable of making its own claims for compositional space and visual form.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that the pictorial subjects here involve the kind of fantasy creation that Horace had already used as an analogy from painting for the purpose of discussing what liberties the poet ought to enjoy. In the opening lines of the *Ars poetica*, he hazarded to say "Pictoribus atque poetis | quidlibet audendi semper fuit aequa potestas" ("painters and poets have always shared the right to dare anything"); and, though Horace probably meant this as a straw man argument that would enable him to erect many limitations on such license, the passionate reception of the text in the Renaissance tended to embrace both the idea of the parallel between the arts and the notion that what brought them together was, precisely, their imaginative freedom.[35] For painters in particular—and, years later, Hollanda will quote Michelangelo himself on this subject—this freedom came to be associated specifically with *grotteschi*, which were understood as a form of artistic production that was especially free from the obligations of literal mimesis. Given precisely the imaginative contours of these capitals as Michelangelo develops them and the fact that this is one of the rare cases in which it is not altogether clear which is the right side up, it is difficult to decide whether the words occupied a space previously left by the drawings or whether the drawings acted subsequently as a boundary to what would have been a poem that could not be completed, at least on the space of this sheet. What is clear is that Michelangelo has exercised a mix of freedom and constraint in both images and words, and he has inscribed this partly formed poem—the Opus One of modern editions—so that the two activities stand in intimate relation.

The relation is intimate, but it is also distanced. The drawings on this sheet were made from three of the four possible turnings; the poem, however, was written in the fourth orientation. No drawing was done with the sheet held in that direction, nor, as it happens, was anything on the recto composed with that same side up. Furthermore, not only is the space of the writing undisturbed by any drawing, but in fact the two surrounding capitals produce something like distinct lines that serve to square off, or be limited by, the writing. It may be that Michelangelo did not wish to be able to read his poem while he was making his sketches,

or, that he did not wish to be looking at his sketches (in the orientation in which he had drawn them, at least) while he was writing his poem.

It is from this perspective of isolation and contagion that we need to consider the poem itself. Whatever the sequence of pictorial composition on this sheet, there was a moment when Michelangelo carefully wrote down a quatrain:

> Molti anni fassi qual felice, in una
> brevissima ora si lamenta e dole;
> o per famosa o per antica prole
> altri s'inlustra, e 'n un momento s'imbruna.
>
> One person passes many years in happiness, and in a single fleeting hour is brought to misery and grief; another shines brightly because of famous or ancient lineage, and in a single moment loses all lustre.[36]

Then he left a space. He may have continued directly, or the sheet may have lain fallow for a while. But in any event, he went on and, in similarly elegant hand, inscribed two more lines which belong as the second half of the next ABBA quatrain, following what will turn out to be his favorite sonnet form. The lacuna in the middle remained, presumably to be filled in once the —*una* | —*ole* lines had been satisfactorily produced in his mind or on his scratch pad. But, despite having trouble with those verses, he finds it possible to produce fair copy of what is necessarily an incoherent piece of writing. Given the careful shadowing and the architectural precision on some of these sketches, it seems as true of the drawing as it is of the writing that he is capable of bringing fairly high levels of polish to elements that fall decidedly short of being completed works.

In fact, these questions of *finito* and *non finito* may well be the point of conjunction between word and image here. In dutiful wheel-of-fortune mode, the complete sonnet quatrain describes the inevitable undoing of two classes of person: those who have been happy for many years and those whose famous ancient lineage has given them luster. Even though Michelangelo did have some interest in establishing a lofty genealogy for the Buonarroti,[37] it is safe to say that neither of these soon-to-be-extinguished forms of well-being applies very much to him in particular. Then follows the pair of lines that does not exist, or with which he was unsatisfied, and finally the two lines with which the whole thing breaks off:

> Cosa mobil non è che sotto el sole
> non vinca morte e cangi la fortuna.
>
> Nothing mutable exists under the sun which death does not conquer and fortune change.

Whatever might have happened in verses five and six, we have arrived here at a *sic transit* of far more immediate personal interest. The poem, a would-be lament to decay that aspires unsuccessfully to completeness, is up against a set of half-perfected, half-erased objects whose status in the world of *grotteschi* defines them as fragmentary, fantastical, and subject to mutability.

If "Molti anni fassi qual felice" is Michelangelo's maiden voyage as a poet, it seems as though at least one strand of the writing on the drawings arises as an attempt to nail down in words the problem of all that instability which the pictorial sketches on the same sheets are

performing, and to do it in a medium that, by some traditional accounts, is itself less subject to decay than painting and sculpture. Whereas the fragmentary language on the recto burst out of a compensatory desire to make mute art (and mute divinity) speak, here on the verso, elaborately structured poetic form stands as a hopeful but unrealizable gesture toward completeness in the face of change. Of course, in the long run neither of these forms of language will effectively supplement painting and sculpture, whether in regard to their silence or their mutability. Nor will poetry itself give language the kind of stability that Michelangelo may have wished for it. Even though in the course of the next few decades he does manage to put many sonnets and madrigals and epitaphs in final form, the poetic impulse will turn out to be as mutable, as self-consuming, and as provisional as is his whole engagement in the enterprise of *disegno*. Still, the mastering of form, alongside the exploration of voice—who is speaking inside an artistic representation, and who is being spoken *to*?—will become matter for both draftsman and writer. And from this moment onward, it is not just words that co-exist with pictures; it is poetry that begins to makes its more stringent demands on his imagination and on the space in which he exercises that imagination.

Sometimes, in the years that witness these composite efforts, that co-existence is peaceful and orderly. The first marks that Michelangelo made on a sheet now at the Ashmolean (Figures 5-27, 5-28) were, most probably, the drawings on the recto.[38] In a relatively orderly fashion, he drew an almost complete horse (minus the head, like many of his sketches of humans) at the top of the page and two less complete efforts at the rear half of the animal directly adjacent to each other at the bottom of the page. There is also a less logical design element, consisting of a hastily executed battle sketch that seems to nestle inside the space of the horse's groin. The conjunction of subjects suggests that all of this work represents efforts, ca. 1504–1505, toward fulfilling the commission for the Palazzo Vecchio frescoes. There are also reflections here of an engagement with the work of Leonardo, both with the elder artist's own contribution to the Palazzo Vecchio project and with his habit of sketching from nature. All this draftsmanship was most likely executed in a short space of time; at some later moment—how much later we cannot guess—the artist seems to have turned the sheet over, rotated it ninety degrees, folded it down the center, and used the verso for a different purpose.

5-27. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 102r. Ashmolean 18. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

If there is nothing but picture on one side of the sheet, there is nothing but words on the other side. Unlike the drawings, the words do not seem to have been executed in one swift inspirational moment but rather over some span of time—again, how long we cannot say. Five different poems, or fragments of poems, none of which appears in any other manuscript, can be found in the tangle of this page. First, Michelangelo probably made use of the right face of the folded page (always his privileged spot for beginning to write) to compose a quite conventional piece of Petrarchism, in which the speaker angrily rails against the power that Amor exercises over him:

5-28. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 102v. Ashmolean 18. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

Grato e felice, a' tuo feroci mali
ostare e vincer mi fu già concesso;
or lasso, il petto vo bagnando spesso
contr'a mie voglia, e so quante tu vali.

To me, grateful and happy, it was once given to resist and conquer your savage evils; now, alas, against my will I often bathe my breast with tears, and I know your true power.

Then he rotated the sheet 180 degrees so that, in what had now in its turn become the privileged position, he wrote a poem on a different theme, though with similar anger. This time, however, the object is (apparently) Julius II: "Tu hai creduto a favole e parole | e premiato che è del ver nimico" ("You have believed tales and talk, and rewarded those who are the enemies of truth"). Next, assuming that he sought out the part of the sheet with the largest amount of empty space, he penned four lines (perhaps the opening quatrain of a sonnet) in a completely different vein:

Colui che 'l tutto fe', fece ogni parte
e poi del tutto la più bella scelse,
per mostrar quivi le suo cose eccelse,
com'ha fatto or colla sua divin'arte.

He who made all made every part and then from all those the most beautiful, to show forth here his sublime qualities, as he has now done with his divine art.[39]

In these verses, we seem to be anticipating a period when Michelangelo explores Platonic metaphors—here, specifically alluding to the story of how Zeuxis attains perfection in his portrait of Helen of Troy by using components drawn from different individuals[40]—to understand the relation of his own art to God's creation. Though there remains a sizeable chunk of space below these lines, he does not continue this poem but rather composes two other verse fragments. Each of these requires its own separate ninety-degree turning of the paper, and each is squeezed into the remaining narrow corners of the sheet. Both of them, like the first verses on the sheet, are passionate outcries concerning his helplessness in the face of desire. Perhaps it is a sign of the hastiness of their composition, or (conceivably) of the sincerity of his feelings, that one of these poems repeats *oilmè, oilmè, oilmè* and the other *O Dio, o Dio, o Dio*: this is, after all, the work of a not very experienced poet. The Platonic quatrain and the invective against the pope are in relatively fair copy, while all three of the Petrarchan efforts are heavily corrected: perhaps that, too, is a sign.

Though we cannot date the texts with as much precision as the images (and their chronology, too, rests on some debatable assumptions), we can certainly presume that the whole sheet reflects Michelangelo's production at some point during the first decade of the sixteenth century and that, starting at this early date, we are seeing an individual who is already covering his sketchpaper with visual inventions and also using it to frame various parts of his emotional life into the kind of verse that requires much working and re-working. The attacks on love may be largely conventional, though it is possible that they represent some passionate sentiments which he is attempting to contain via the conventions of verse. The outburst against the patron, on the other hand, we are probably right to construe as representing genuine feeling—though, of course, choosing to express this anger in the form of a sonnet already presupposes a willingness to bend passion to form. I am, however, less interested in how the poems function and what clues they offer concerning their author's real state of mind, than in observing the page itself, one side of which functions as a relatively orderly site for sketching, while the other side is a frequently revisited and repeatedly rotated crazy quilt of self-expressions that range widely in subject and oscillate between the dictates of passion and of prosody. The two sides are kept separate. Or, rather, *almost* separate: the spatial arrangement of the drawings makes it possible, when the sheet is turned over and its orientation shifted ninety degrees, for an invisible equator to become the clearly marked spine of a book, therefore suitable for inscribing with words. And—here we are in a more speculative mode—the horse's hindquarters can perhaps not fail to bleed through to the writing surface when Michelangelo chooses to compose his Platonic quatrain about the sublimity of God's art.[41] Still, for the most part, a quarantine is in force.

On other sheets of paper, words and images operate at a far more intense level of contagion. The very beautiful drawings on both sides of a sheet now in the Louvre (Figures 5-29, 5-30)[42] have caused much dispute as to subject matter, purpose, and date. What can be said for certain is that they consist of three different groupings featuring the Madonna, that all of them, once again, show the influence of Leonardo, and that, whatever their precise

destination (if any), they, too, probably date from the opening years of the century. Besides the extraordinary finish of the penwork, what is perhaps most distinctive is that both sides include some form of squaring-off lines that apparently make reference to the external outline of future finished work. On the recto, these lines seem merely functional, and they are accompanied by a cryptic autograph notation that probably refers to a projected transfer of the design into some other form.[43] The rectangle on the verso, however, is a representational part of the design itself, creating a sense of depth, out of which the Madonna and Child emerge in what may be relief or may be fully three-dimensional sculptural form.[44] I emphasize these framing elements in part because they are unusual in the Michelangelo corpus. Most of his figure studies, unless they are explicitly architectural, look like sketches from life; only rarely do they represent the sculptural work that they are destined to become. This sheet, in other words, is to an unusual degree geared toward a final product; and, particularly on the verso, this gives the drawing a special sort of monumentality, almost as though it *were* the final product—like a presentation drawing, but a quarter century before Michelangelo made presentation drawings.[45]

Michelangelo did not leave the drawing in that form, however. Sometime later—and, again, the dates are disputed—he inscribed twenty-four lines of verse in elegant script and without correction, the first eight with a firmer hand and in slightly larger letters than the rest; beneath that, and presumably still later, he composed some alternative lines, not all of them decipherable. The body of the text is laid down in such a fashion that its right edge finishes precisely at the point where the fictive marble slab begins. Clearly, those twenty-four lines do not represent a working draft, like much of the poetry on the Ashmolean sheet; rather, they are formally inscribed in this space on the page. It is difficult to guess what the artist originally chose to picture here—perhaps a Madonna who opens her cloak, in the style of a Misericordia or a Caritas, to reveal or protect a Christ Child who is absorbed in reading a book, the whole thing inside some sort of marble frame. In any event, the ensemble was subsequently expanded to include a lengthy piece of writing that, depending on how you look at it, may simply be adjacent to the pictorial sketch or may be located in the space of the fictional monument itself.

5-29. *(facing)* Michelangelo, *Corpus* 25r. Louvre R. F. 4112. Louvre, Paris

5-30. *(facing)* Michelangelo, *Corpus* 25v. Louvre R. F. 4112. Louvre, Paris

Whatever the rabbit-duck possibilities here, the content of the text bears close attention:

Tu ha' 'l viso più dolce che la sapa,

e passato vi par sù la lumaca,
tanto ben lustra, e più bel c'una rapa;
e' denti bianchi come pastinaca,
in modo tal che invaghiresti 'l papa;
e gli occhi del color dell'utriaca;
e' cape' bianchi e biondi più che porri:
ond'io morrò, se tu non mi soccorri.

You have a face sweeter than grape must, and it looks like a snail seems to have passed across it, it shines so much, and it is more beautiful than a turnip; teeth white as parsnips, so that you would charm even the pope; and eyes the color of medicinal treacle; and hair whiter and blonder than leeks: so I shall die if you do not come to my help.[46]

If I stress the formal aspects of this design, it is in order to establish just how complex the relation between drawing and verse-making has become. We have just considered a sheet with multiple poems on the verso, where picture and text seem to exist in almost entirely accidental relation, while in a previous chapter we looked at a page from ca. 1510 on which Michelangelo versified and sketched the experience of painting the Sistine Ceiling in explicitly parallel terms. Though in all of these cases there is an element of irony where word and image intersect, here the incongruity, between sacred visual representation and verbal low comedy, is at its most radical. The poem itself, after all, is in the mode of mock encomium, a form that depends historically on a parodic relation to predecessor texts—in this case, the Petrarchan blazon. Michelangelo, as it happens, operates at a second level of relation to predecessors, since he patterns his poem with uncharacteristic fidelity after comic verse by Berni, Burchiello, and, possibly, Lorenzo de' Medici.[47] In each of these cases, the jokes depend on the intensity of the speaker's engagement in a high literary mode at the same time as he turns out to have a derisory field of reference with which to build his glorious erotic similitudes.

But Michelangelo is able to go his comic predecessors one better because he is possessed of an additional instrument whereby loftiness may be deflated with mockery. To inscribe these ludicrous lines next to what is not only a Madonna and Child but also the *sculpture* of a Madonna and Child—and with the Christ Child's head buried in a book, no less—is to add yet one more dimension (literally) to the complex gap between the heroic and the prosaic. The move also enables him to step far more directly into the poetic persona. When someone like Lorenzo de' Medici composes the Polyphemus-style love monologue of the boorish Barberino, the joke is that the real poet, Il Magnifico (or someone in his circle), could not possibly be further from the bumpkin whose voice he assumes.[48] Michelangelo, on the other hand, rarely opts for that kind of distance in his poetic work. Concluding the formal verses with a line that may be read as "s'i' massi aver fussi possibile | io fare' oggi qui cose incredibile [sic]" ("if it were possible for me to have blocks of stone, I'd here today make incredible things"), he is adding yet another element to his self-exploration via drawing and versifying. This sheet of paper—for some considerable period of time representing the remains of a failed project—has now, via the addition of what seems like preposterously inappropriate verse, become a sort of skewed *mise en abîme* in which the maker of both picture and word is outed as someone whose every ambition is doomed to laughable disappointment. The idea of accomplishing "cose incredibile" (and about this phrase there is no textual dispute) remains in the realm of unpublished writing and uncompleted statuary. But the goals of self-scrutiny and self-

representation are most decidedly achieved by placing these visual and verbal marks in such curious proximity on the page.

6
PRIVATE IN PUBLIC

If an anthologist were to string together most of the textual materials we have so far found on drawing sheets, including cryptic bits of piety, half-legible references to specific individuals, and fragmentary citations from Dante and Petrarch, a reader might well come to the conclusion that Michelangelo's preferred mode of communication was the soliloquy. Indeed, such a view of the Master has, and has long had, much to commend it. From his lifetime onwards, legends have grown up around both the notion that he was a solitary man with a difficult personality and the notion that he achieved some of his grandest masterpieces single-handed. Historical ironies abound in regard to both these received ideas. The contemporary biographers—and we owe to them nearly all the truth *and* nearly all the myth we have on the subject—play a complicated game with issues of Michelangelo's sociability. So far as his artistic achievements are concerned, they promote as much as possible the image of the lone creator in defiance of what were almost certainly the facts, for instance in the frescoing of the Sistine Ceiling; at the same time, they are obliged—even enthusiastically—to chronicle subsequent phases of the artist's career, like the making of the Julius Tomb, when his projects were so out of line with what any single person could achieve that the final result was undeniably a veritable anthology of work by many hands, if it reached fruition at all. Yet if, as regards his genius, they wish to nudge Michelangelo toward the status of solo performer, contrariwise they take pains to prop up his image as a gregarious and jolly companion when they are portraying his personality. These rhetorical moves contain their own irony, since the lists of friends, pupils, altruistic deeds, convivial occasions, and *bons mots* so carefully enumerated toward the end of Vasari's and Condivi's biographies, even if they are the truth and nothing but the truth, make it perfectly clear that Michelangelo's supporters felt the need to controvert widely held assumptions that he was problematically antisocial.[1]

All these reciprocal contradictions leave us, properly, with a Michelangelo who was in reality neither a pathological recluse nor a social butterfly, and the present chapter will attempt to adjust the balance slightly away from an emphasis on introspection or solipsism and towards the way he lived inside a professional and personal community. It bears repeating that the very nature of the archive of Michelangelo on paper stands as testimony to a life lived in crowded company. The nearly two thousand letters to, from, and about Michelangelo that have been collected in the invaluable *Carteggio*; the circulation and re-circulation of pages with drawings and/or poems; the survival of so many fragile pieces of paper, which required the services of a devoted entourage[2]: all of these factors speak to the presence of communities. But individual sheets will unlock more particulars about the life of these communities and how the creative work of the artist defined, and was defined by, them.

There is perhaps no more intriguing crux as regards Michelangelo's sociability than the question of his relation to pupils; and this, like so many other matters in the life of the artist, takes us back to Vasari. The "begats" of artistic discipleship represent a master narrative throughout the *Lives*, both in the macro sense, whereby each age learns from but also aims to

surpass the masters of the previous age, and in the micro sense, whereby individual biographies begin with teachers and end with pupils. One might go so far as to say that the generating paradox of Vasari's entire monumental project was the conflict between the *longue durée*, during which art gets better and better, and the case of individual geniuses, each with a group of followers who by definition can never become leaders. And even if Vasari can finesse this problem as regards the masters of the fifteenth century, it becomes insurmountable as he reaches the end of the life of Michelangelo, from whose pinnacle of greatness no account of upward progress could possibly proceed.[3]

No surprise, then, that one of Vasari's most problematic sets of claims has to do with Michelangelo's role as mentor:

> Those who say he was not willing to teach are wrong, because he was always willing with his intimates and with anyone who asked him for counsel; and I have been present on many such occasions, but of these, out of consideration, I say nothing, not wishing to reveal the deficiencies of others.[4]

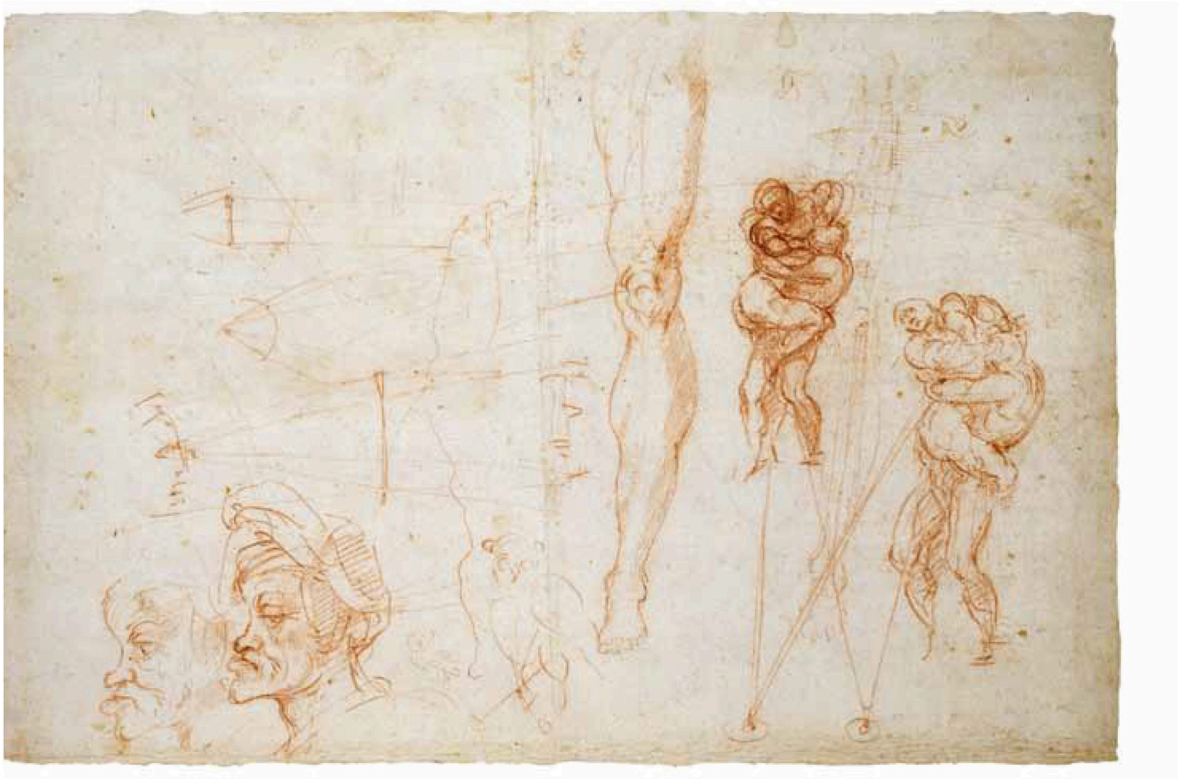
Like so many passages in the *Lives*, this is a tissue of rhetorical evasions. Clearly, many *have* claimed that Michelangelo was unwilling to teach. In answering these unnamed critics, Vasari first sidesteps the category of pupil and substitutes "famigliari e chi dimandava consiglio," suggesting relationships that were either more intimate or more occasional than would be typical of the conventional master and apprentice. He then plays the discretion card: he *could* talk about mentorship, but he refrains because it would oblige him to reveal how inferior these followers were to the leader. This scruple does not trouble him in other cases, including Donatello, Piero di Cosimo, Fra Bartolommeo, and Parmigianino.[5] Nor, as it turns out, does it trouble him here, since he goes on immediately to disparage Pietro Urbano, Antonio Mini, and Ascanio Condivi, who, we are told, were (respectively) lazy, deficient in talent, and unable to get the job done. The underlying issue here—in fact, cited as a point of pride by the Master himself in a letter to his nephew[6]—is that Michelangelo did not maintain the kind of official *bottega* that was characteristic, for instance, of Raphael. Or, to put it another way, that Michelangelo's contemporaries were uncertain exactly how to categorize the group of younger artists around him—hence, Vasari's rather non-specific term *famigliari* and the even less revealing *coloro che stettono con seco in casa* ("those who stayed with him in his house"), not to mention the issue raised evasively by Condivi and far more directly both in one of Michelangelo's own letters and in a famous slur hurled by Aretino, that these young men were his sexual partners.[7]

Even if we do not get any closer than these approximations, the sketch paper that circulated as a social medium ought to offer a promising field of investigation: drawing, after all, is not merely one aspect of Renaissance artistic education; it is the centrally defining activity. Writing in the early fifteenth century, Cennino Cennini initiates his book of instruction by imagining that the gifted beginner who possesses an innate love of drawing is instinctively drawn to the search for a teacher: already, in other words, a talent in *disegno* is being directly channeled through the system of masters and apprentices.[8] A hundred and fifty years later, Baccio Bandinelli disseminated engravings of his self-proclaimed Academy (Figure 6-1), in which a room full of classical or classicizing statuettes is occupied by a bevy of pupils, each of them with pen in hand poised over his own tablet.[9]

This image may help us understand, by contrast, the case of Michelangelo. As I have argued elsewhere,[10] Bandinelli worked hard to establish his cultural prestige by associating

himself both with the heritage of antiquity and with a model of academic production whereby schools of pupils could be effectively trained by a master at the same time as they were employed in executing large-scale projects with little or no diminution as regards the master's originating idea. It is easy to see how Michelangelo—famous even in his own time for dismissing helpers *and* for failing to finish large-scale projects—would deviate from this model. No doubt there were pieces of sketch paper covered in solo efforts by Mini, Condivi et al., just like the production that is implied in Bandinelli's Academy engravings. But what we actually possess as the archive of Michelangelo in relation to his studio consists of many single sheets on which we can detect the hands of both Master and pupil in close proximity. Typically, these involve repeated figures, their subjects tending to be formulaic within Michelangelo's repertoire, executed at different levels of draftsmanly skill. So, to judge by what is admittedly a limited body of evidence, in place of a studio full of neophytes working in parallel series on the time-honored exercise of rendering a classical-style three-dimensional object into a two-dimensional image, we have a small number of pupils following their Master by producing a copy of the Master's work in the same medium on the same sheet of paper. The life of Michelangelo's studio turns out to be more intimate and more focussed on the genius of its leader than either on replicating a classical model or on making new work via some sort of assembly line.

6-1. Enea Vico, engraving, Academy of Baccio Bandinelli. Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1917 (17.50.16-135). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



6-2. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 237r. Ashmolean 45. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

We might take the case of one Ashmolean page (Figure 6-2), whose recto contains, in addition to various clearly pedagogical studies in angles of perspective and vision, no fewer than four subjects that appear in pairs. The profile heads, wrestling men, owls, and left legs exhibit different degrees of similarity, but they are in every case adjacent to each other.[11] The verso of another Ashmolean sheet (Figure 6-3) exhibits even busier labors, including, by rough count, three profile heads, eleven hanks of hair, and sixteen eyes.[12] Scholars attending to this body of work have performed strenuous acts of connoisseurship in distinguishing the labor of the pupils from that of the Master, sometimes separating out the pairs, sometimes giving both to Michelangelo or both to a pupil, who then gets named on the basis of stylistic hypotheses.

6-3. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 96v. Ashmolean 323. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

These are, to be sure, valid scholarly efforts, particularly (as in the case of the fine work by Joannides, Wallace, and others[13]) when the conjectural nature of the enterprise is freely admitted. Yet, like so many studies in drawing, it represents a focus on product to the exclusion of process. Consider, for instance, the verso of the sheet with the pairs of figures (Figure 6-4), which includes twenty-two separate sketches executed in three different orientations. There are some drawings that may well represent the Master setting a traditional exercise theme and / or the pupil producing a copy of it, including profile and frontal heads with headdresses, a skull, and loose strands of hair. But there are also absurd and impossible representations. Is it really a rearing horse held up by an urn, or are these two separate sketches that have been made into an improbable unified monument? Is the figure in the lower right hand corner mooning us, or is he an acrobat? And if he is an acrobat, has he come tumbling off one of the ladders? What is the relation between the rather plausible giraffe, his neck crossed by either a rider (as is generally claimed) or by a saddled horse (as I believe), and the squawking, long-necked mythical beast in a ninety-degree relation nearby, the latter either a witty *jeu d'esprit* or a piece of astonishingly incompetent draftsmanship? And, while we're on that subject, what about some of those ladders (or are they easels?): could anyone even remotely connected with Michelangelo's entourage draw that badly?

6-4. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 237v. Ashmolean 45. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

Such questions point to more than issues of attribution. Granted, on all these sheets as we now have them, there exist sketches of varying authenticity as Michelangelos. Yet what is equally interesting is that, whatever hands are responsible for individual drawings, in the course of their making, these pieces of paper were passed back and forth countless times, on each occasion subject to being repeatedly scrutinized and repeatedly re-inscribed. Armed only with these replications, we cannot fully reconstruct the life of the studio, but we can ask some important questions. Of course, the pupils learned from the Master (or, as Vasari implies, failed to learn from the Master). But did the Master, when he took the sheet back, learn from the pupils? And when he repeated his own exercise, did he learn from himself, just as he did on the many pages we have considered where the replicated work was entirely his own? After all, the making of the finished product that lies beyond the whole activity of drawing is itself a sequence of iterations, from the most casual studio sketches to the final *a secco* touches on fresco or the polishing of marble; and this common ground that was shared between Michelangelo and his assistants makes it clear that even at the early stages of production he worked in a kind of conversation that, for all the imperial power of the Master's voice, was not entirely soliloquy.

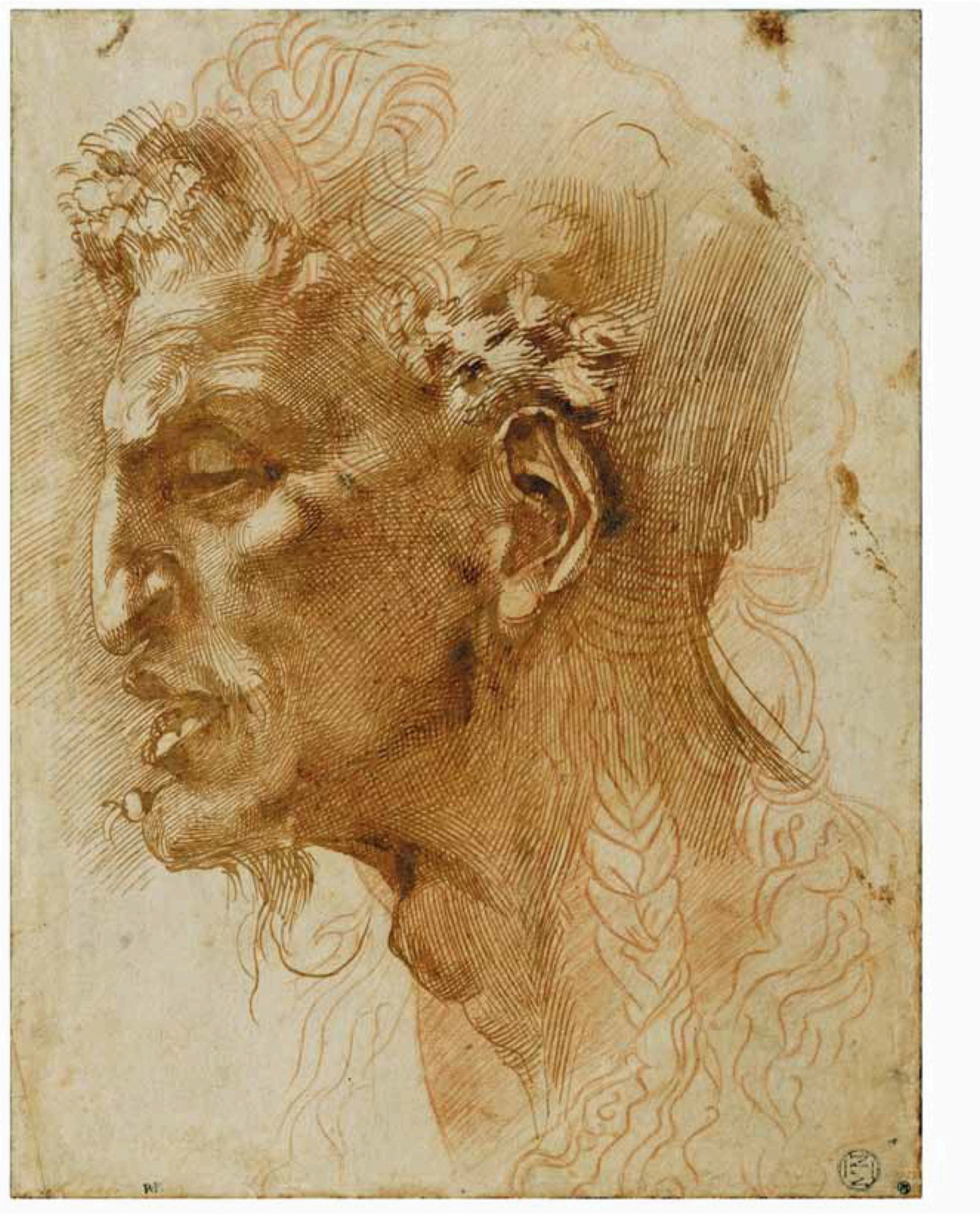
The conversation becomes more intimate, as well as more imperializing, on the recto of the sheet with the sixteen eye studies (Figure 6-5). At some point, this, too, was an exercise page, which was held in predominantly vertical orientation and used to sketch several profile heads in red chalk, similar to those on the verso and on a number of other pages that appear to have circulated in the studio. But it is impossible to attribute these efforts individually because Michelangelo has himself completely subsumed this pedagogical work in a brilliant *invenzione* of his own. He turns the sheet horizontally, whereupon, first with black chalk and then with pen and ink, he constructs a heavily crosshatched dragon with a complex tangle of

appendages. As in so many other cases, he could have used a fresh sheet, or at least one with more empty space, but he has chosen rather to work in a crowded zone, where he has produced heavy strokes that might have been intended to obliterate the previous markings, except that some of the faces find themselves precisely in the highlighted parts of the dragon where the crosshatching fails to obscure them. And the peekaboo game becomes even more spirited at the edge of his new figure, where a pre-existing profile forms the precise contours for the background shading that outlines the dragon, leaving the student's human and the Master's monster in a perfect cross-species nose-to-snout juxtaposition.

6-5. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 96r. Ashmolean 323. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

The temptation to moralize this draftsmanly magic act is particularly strong since we have another sheet where a similar move is made (Figures 6-6, 6-7).[14] The verso of this page contains pedagogical materials, possibly exercises set by Michelangelo, possibly responses by a pupil; it may be significant that the only bit of polished penwork universally ascribed to Michelangelo takes the form, once again, of a dragon coiled upon itself. The recto began life as yet another ideal head in profile, itself probably copied by a pupil from the Master's original. When the sheet returned home to the Master, it was, once more, attacked with intense crosshatching and sharp contrasts of light and dark. This time, however, the metamorphosis is more complete. The idealized human form has been submitted to a definitive sex change (most probably—though I have some questions about the gender of the original figure), with an exaggerated Adam's apple and with its formerly graceful curves turned into the sharp angles of a particularly sinister faun. All that is left of the image underneath are some straggly tresses, devoid of any shadowing and three-dimensionality, most of which (again) could easily

have been covered up but which were allowed to remain with all their stylistic inconsistency showing. And, of course, the conceptual transit is the same: from beauty to ugliness, from angelic to demonic.



6-6. *(facing)* Michelangelo, *Corpus* 95r. Louvre 684. Louvre, Paris

Even the most cautious scholars have seen some sort of allegorical meaning in these metamorphoses from conventional and idealizing human faces to idiosyncratic inventions that seem to have emerged from the underworld. It has been said that perhaps Michelangelo was

making a joke about his own *terribilità*, or threatening his slow-witted pupils; perhaps the beast tangled up in knots was some sort of self-portrait.[15] But this is far more than the happenstance of two pages, though these may be the only instances where the opposites are so strikingly fused. There is a similar elective affinity—or better, *dis*affinity—in the relation between subject matter and pedagogical purpose on other pages. We possess at least twenty-five examples in the Michelangelo archive of the lofty visual genre that Vasari called *teste divine*.[16] Some are male, some female, some indeterminate; some can be connected to finished projects, some not. So many of them are evidently student work or early copies that we can be certain they represent a traditional exercise in learning the manner of Michelangelo, whether in his immediate presence or not.

6-7. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 95v. Louvre 684. Louvre, Paris

What is equally noteworthy is the number of times that—like the dragon and the faun—these divine heads coexist with radically un-idealized figures. A sheet in Frankfurt (Figures 6-8, 6-9) shows on the recto what are clearly pedagogical efforts, including one possibly ideal face

set amidst caricatures, while on the verso an elaborately coiffed beauty is juxtaposed with a puffy-jowled boy.[17] A Princeton drawing (Figure 6-10) recently attributed to Michelangelo[18] (though the lingering questions about its autograph status only serve to underline the issue of studio circulation) contains the profile head of a beautiful long-haired boy whose chest space is occupied in part by a hook-nosed old man. The so-called *Count of Canossa* (Figure 6-11), which we possess only in a copy,[19] sets in parallel profile the idealized helmeted head of a warrior with a simian figure baring its teeth, plus a violent wrestling scene, possibly to be understood as embossed on the shoulder armor. The armed and coiffed martial maid who has been given the name "Zenobia" (Figure 6-12) is closely shadowed by an old man, while the verso (Figure 6-13) includes exercise work depicting another old man and two skulls.[20] The very beautiful and unquestionably autograph profile figure traditionally but inaccurately associated with Vittoria Colonna (Figure 6-14)[21] occupies the recto in regal isolation, but her verso (Figure 6-15) includes four incompetent student faces, one autograph screaming Fury, and one (presumably also autograph) squatting defecator.

6-8 and 6-9. *(facing)* Michelangelo, *Corpus* 322r,v. Frankfurt Städelsches Institut 392. Städel Museum, Frankfurt

6-10. Michelangelo, bust of a youth and character head of an old man. Princeton University Art Museum. Gift of Frank Jewett Mather Jr. x1947-134

6-11. (after) Michelangelo, "Count of Canossa." BM 1895-9-15-492. British Museum, London

6-12. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 307r. Uffizi 598E. Uffizi, Florence

6-13. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 307v. Uffizi 598E. Uffizi, Florence

What we are observing here is the coincidence of two oppositions. The ideal form is both aesthetic and moral. The didactic task of instilling the principles of figure-drawing by the use of such forms finds itself therefore subject to two kinds of fatal contradiction: the student fails to replicate the beautiful; and the Master, however easily he can create beauty, cannot content himself with the ideal but is constrained to place it in demonic surroundings. Michelangelo has reproduced on paper the powerful contradictions that were animating his psyche, contradictions generated by the relations of the studio, which his close reading of Petrarch was teaching him how to frame in poetic form. Indeed, we may see in his insistence here on maintaining oppositions—whether in the re-configured faun and dragon, which allow traces of

their predecessors to peep through the cover, or in the many other instances where the two sides of the duality get equal space—the same kind of irony that operates when Michelangelo puts words and pictures together. The Sistine poem and drawing, as we saw in Chapter Three, juxtaposed text and picture in the ironic mode as a response to all the painful antinomies of struggling to fulfill Julius II's commission for a fresco. A decade or two later, during the even more troubled times of the tombs for Pope Julius and for the Medici, it may be that the artist is overwhelmed by the requirement to produce idealized images and the challenges of undertaking any such enterprise as leader of a team. Thus these various demons appear like the return of the repressed, bubbling up to the surface of the page not so much for the practical reason that he has commissions to produce hellish scenes—those will come later—but because he *doesn't*.

6-14. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 316r. BM 1895-9-15-493. British Museum, London

Of course, the discursive activity of masters and pupils is not limited to passing images back and forth. It should come as no surprise that these same studio pages contain a considerable amount of text as well. Whom was Michelangelo addressing and what was he saying when he inscribed the word *fiamma* (see Figure 6-9), which started as the continuation of an arc that shoots off from the figure with the elaborate headdress and ends as a flourish on the leg that separates the beautiful female from the ugly boy on the verso of the Frankfurt sheet? Impossible to say. Better begin with a statement whose pedagogical purpose appears more direct. *Disegnia Antonio disegnia Antonio disegnia e non perdere tempo* ("Draw, Antonio, draw, Antonio, draw and don't waste time") (Figure 6-16), elegantly inscribed by the Master on a sheet with some of his most exquisite sketchwork in pen and some notably inferior efforts at imitating it, is *not* one of those pieces of text that has been ignored by scholars.[22] The conjunction between the voice of an exasperated instructor and the draftsmanly hand of an incompetent pupil has provided the smoking gun for a decidedly baleful view of Michelangelo's pedagogical situation, confirming Vasari's bleakest implications.

The pupil in question is presumably Antonio Mini, but before we get to his particular story it must be noted that this page resembles some of the sheets we considered in Chapter Two,[23] which stand as the point of conjunction for a wide variety of activities in the studio. Besides the two Madonnas with their respective imitations and the statement that clearly relates to them, there are some five other inscriptions: the recto contains a very brief bit of practical notation (*grano 10 2 | fave 2 1/2*), probably in Mini's hand, and a grid of lines squaring off the more finished of the Madonnas, including numbers (1-5 in the horizontal direction, 1-8 in the vertical) that may be in a handwriting belonging to neither Mini nor Michelangelo.[24] The verso contains some large but highly illegible sketching efforts in black and red chalk; a cryptic set of letters (*a ms f*?), probably in Michelangelo's hand; and, along with some short strokes testing the pen point, fourteen lines of *ricordi* covering purchases made in October of 1524, unmistakably in the Master's hand. There is every reason to suppose that all of this was done around that date and, therefore, that at this moment two or three members of the studio were variously sketching, studying, doodling, making the most casual of verbal notations, and composing formal records, all in the same space.

6-15. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 316v. BM 1895-9-15-493. British Museum, London

But Mini, whom we have already heard about on a number of occasions, deserves our full attention here. Most often—and, to a large extent, because of "Disegnia Antonio . . . "—"Mini" has been the scholarly placeholder assigned to instances of weak draftsmanship. In Chapter Two, we saw that he was credited with a childlike drawing (see Figures 2-12, 2-13) in the margins of a sheet that included many other inscriptions, as well as with some equally unimpressive lines sketched around the address of a letter to Michelangelo (see Figure 2-4); and, so far as images in the present chapter are concerned, it should be pointed out that the underdrawings of Figures 6-5 and 6-6 have been attributed to him largely on the basis that

Michelangelo was willing to cover them up. When the sixteen eyes in Figure 6-3 are parcelled out among different hands, Mini is generally assigned those that are understood to be the weakest; in similar fashion, connoisseurs regularly attach his name to almost every sheet showing conspicuously deficient draftsmanship (providing, of course, that it can be plausibly dated to the proper decade).[25] As is notably the case on the "Disegnia Antonio" sheet: here is a page on which Michelangelo has with, it seems, exceptional clarity of purpose, set a pair of exercises, one with a Madonna and Child facing each other in profile, and the other (the page having been turned upside-down) with the two of them facing forward. Each drawing is set down in such a way as to leave an equal space to its right so that the pupil can produce the respective copy. At the bottom of one of those spaces, adjacent to the more finished of the two drawings and conforming almost perfectly to its implied sculptural base, the Master has in the same ink composed his insistent admonition, so that the apprentice can be instructed simultaneously by visual example and by verbal precept. And given all these educational advantages, what does the pupil produce? He takes his red chalk and copies the merest outlines of the originals without even managing to keep his efforts on the same scale. Maybe in his case drawing *was* a waste of time.

6-16. *(facing)* Michelangelo, *Corpus* 240r. BM 1859-5-14-818. British Museum, London

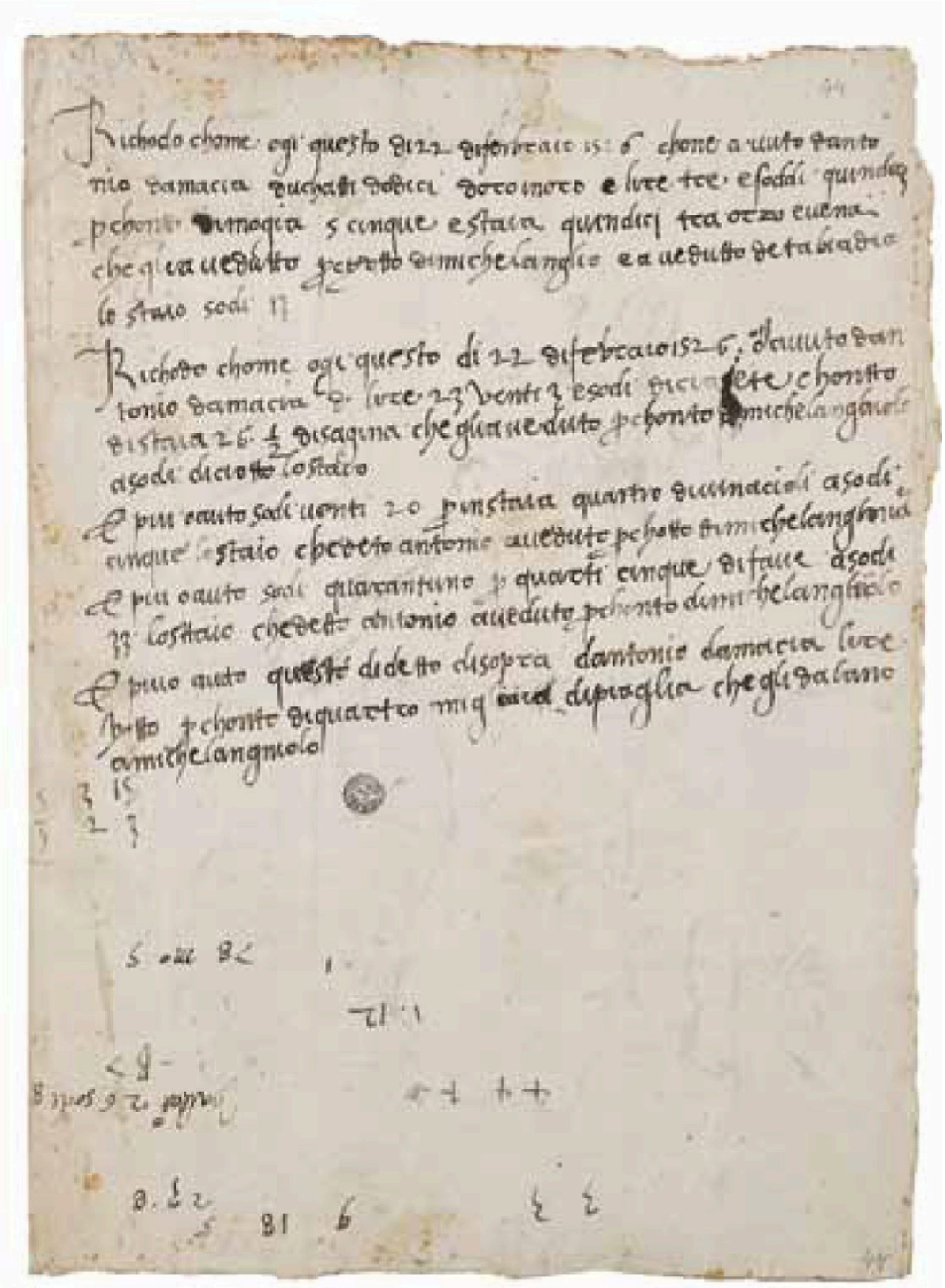
Yet a more complicated story lies behind and before this one communication, which will give us a fuller comprehension of Michelangelo and his studio during a particularly difficult decade and a half of his life. In 1523, while Michelangelo was on a brief visit to Rome paying obeisance to the newly elected Medici Pope Clement VII, Piero Gondi hired Mini on the artist's behalf in Florence. The letter relating this circumstance announces that Mini wants to draw and wants to do everything that is necessary in preparation for Michelangelo's imminent return, and—a big inducement, apparently—that he doesn't require a salary advance.[26] Gondi has already given him exercises in drawing, and he looks forward to seeing the results, though he has obviously hired the young man without waiting until he passed the test. There are also encouraging assertions that Mini is "uno gharzone costumato e da fare buona riuscita" ("a well-mannered boy likely to succeed"), contrary to the bad report of him put forward by yet another member of the circle; Gondi promises to keep the matter quiet so that it will not be derailed by these negative voices. The elements of *l'affaire Mini* are already in place: he is a fledgling draftsman; he is willing to work as a studio helper; he is being placed in a position where he may be the instrument of intrigue.

In fact, Mini is one in a series of individuals in Michelangelo's life who were given an ambiguous job description. We have no indication to what extent Gondi might have been acting under Michelangelo's orders when he hired Mini; we only know that there was general discussion of the young man's candidacy, both pro and con, within an entourage headed by Giovan Francesco Fattucci, the chaplain of Santa Maria del Fiore and a significant intermediary between the artist and the papacy. Most relevant, perhaps, is the fact that a little over two years earlier, the career of Michelangelo's previous assistant, Pietro Urbano, had come to a bad end. Dispatched to Rome with the assignment of finishing and installing the *Risen Christ*, Urbano is reported to have done the sculptural work badly, claimed the statue as his own, thrown his money around in whoring and gambling, and, in Sebastiano del Piombo's suggestive phrase, "played the nymph in velvet slippers" throughout the city.[27] To make matters worse, Michelangelo came to believe that members of his family knew about some of Urbano's (unspecified) malefactions without reporting them back to him, as we learn from an undated Michelangelo letter full of other sarcastic attacks on his father. Whatever the truth of these matters—and it is not impossible that there was a cabal exaggerating the troubles—Michelangelo dismisses Urbano: "I'm sending him back to Pistoia this morning and he will not return to me any more," he writes to Lodovico.[28] He is thus bereft of a live-in assistant at just the same period when the election of the sternly reformist Dutch Pope Adrian VI had threatened the production of art. With the pope's death a year later and the election of Clement VII, the timing is perfect for someone to take Urbano's place. But we can now retrospectively read between the lines in Gondi's letter of recommendation to observe that the ideal qualifications for the job would be the presumption of a dependably innocent morality and a willingness to learn the trade of art that was not, however, likely to result in usurpation of the Master's name.

It proved to have been a good fit indeed. Within a month of Gondi's first letter, Mini starts carrying significant money and communications within the Medici circle in Florence; then, after the Florentine Republic has risen and fallen and Michelangelo feels himself in danger from his former Medici patrons, he flees with Mini and even larger sums of money, to Venice. It is perhaps significant that throughout the 1520s—one of the most problematic phases in the Master's creative career—extant documents tell us almost nothing about Mini the apprentice artist but a great deal about the Mini who keeps records for Michelangelo, acts on his behalf, and produces official copies of his Master's letters.[29] After all, one of the most inept of the

pages (Figures 6-17, 6-18),[30] earns its attribution to Mini not just because of the (to quote deTolnay) "infantile insicurezza" of the drawings but also because the recto contains a long series of *ricordi* concerning expenditures collected and disbursed during February of 1527, all of them in Mini's highly serviceable (and not at all infantile or uncertain) handwriting.

But it is the final stages of Mini's career with Michelangelo that demonstrate the most complicated aspects of the connection between a studio relationship and the production of art. At this point, the archive is at its most tantalizing, offering many pieces of information but few causal connections among them. We know that in January of 1531 Mini is in the thick of an unsuitable love affair with a dowerless Florentine girl; his uncle, in fact, writes to Michelangelo in the hopes of the Master's intervention. We know that a couple of months earlier Michelangelo had withheld the painting of Leda that he had promised to Alfonso d'Este because of the condescending treatment he had received from the Duke's emissary; and the outcome of that story, as recounted by both Condivi and Vasari, is that Michelangelo gave the painting to Mini, who took it with him to France, where he was supposed to sell it to the King and thereby provide dowries for his sisters. Vasari adds that, in addition to the *Leda*, Mini carried with him many drawings, cartoons, and "two chests full of models" (2.686). We have a considerable paper trail covering his ill-fated journey abroad, in the course of which Mini failed to meet with Francis I, blundered his way into logistical and, eventually, legal difficulty as regards his valuable artistic cargo, and finally died (in 1533), leaving a mess of lawsuits to be sorted out by the same uncle who had (apparently successfully) thwarted the Florentine marriage.[31] The questions we cannot answer are precisely the most intriguing: with what kind of blessing, if any, did Mini leave Michelangelo's service for France? And what sort of consent was he given as regards his enterprises there?



6-17. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 314r. Archivio Buonarroti XII fol. 44. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

What gives those questions more than minor biographical interest is the kind of career that Mini made for himself during his brief remaining time in France. To judge from Mini's numerous letters back to Michelangelo (few or none of which seem to have received an answer), the young man was operating simultaneously as a broker for the immensely valuable *Leda*, a personal emissary from his world-famous Master, both to the Florentine expatriate artistic community and to the French nobility, and—perhaps most importantly—as the artist who could produce copies of Michelangelo's work that bore the stamp of official approval from

the great man himself, who was at this point unlikely ever to cross the Alps in person. We should recall that it is exactly in this same period that much more socially prominent individuals around Michelangelo than Mini are beginning to receive drawings as gifts from the Master and, equally significant, to have copies made of them which are being cherished as possible substitutions for the originals.[32] If, to one group in Michelangelo's circle, drawings represent a precious personal gift, to another group they function as the currency whereby his brilliant inventions generate other artistic careers. Granted, Mini may be exaggerating his status in the letters he writes, and Michelangelo may have recollected no intention of authorizing this commerce when he read these letters. Still, the whole thing was no mere delusion of grandeur: whether Mini lived to see the results or not, he did represent the means by which the artistic property that was Michelangelo started to become international, as is witnessed by the fact that imitations after his drawings began from this moment to turn up in France and that some of the autograph drawings remain there to this day because Mini had exported them.[33]

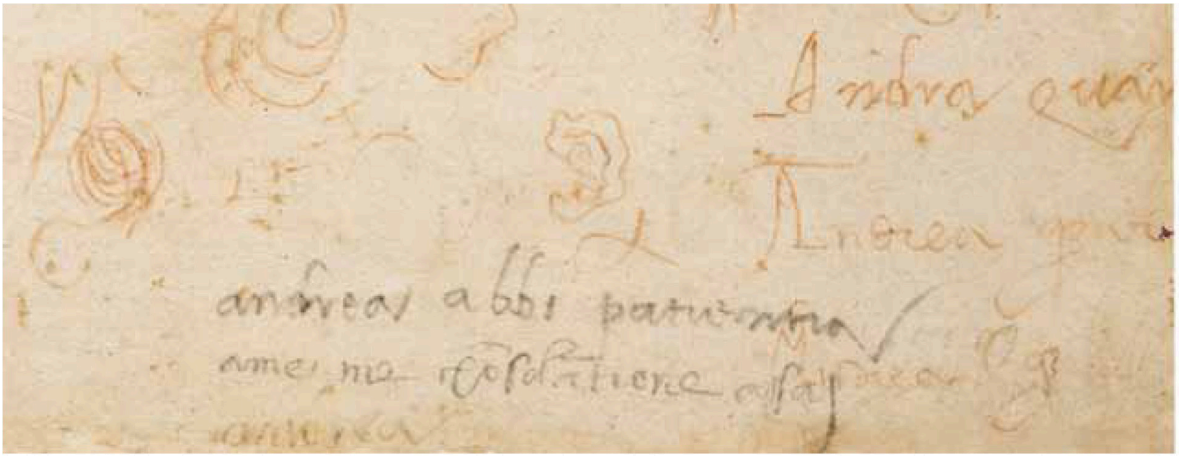
6-18. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 314v. Archivio Buonarroti XII fol. 44. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

Mini, in short, did not waste his own time or Michelangelo's. In the course of these eight years, his role developed from inept follower to personal representative and artist responsible for the diffusion of the Master's work in the larger world. In Michelangelo's life, and perhaps in the history of art as well, a change has taken place: Urbano had performed his duties as an assistant poorly and had tried to take credit for the final work; Mini, whatever his skill level, has carved out for himself the role of official disciple and interpreter. After all, there is more to the history of Mini attributions than is apparent from the Madonnas of Figure 6-16. While some have seen the mark of Mini only in low-quality work (with one scholar finding his skill

level to be inferior to that of his own five-year-old child), at the other end of the spectrum, whole historical reconstructions have been attempted so as to credit Mini with some of the most revered and most widely authenticated work that carries the name Michelangelo: the *Cleopatra*, the *Labors of Hercules*, and even a Michelangelo self-portrait.[34] Indeed, there is a good reason why Mini should turn up so Zelig-like in places where majority opinion has credited the Master: whether he was innately gifted or not, he was being trained to replicate the work of his teacher. If connoisseurs are still arguing about whether some of the *teste divine* are by Mini or by Michelangelo, it is a tribute to the effectiveness of this process as well as to the fact that the relation between original and copy may have been different in 1530 from what it is today.

Of course, when we consider the exquisite Madonnas and the lame attempts at replicating them on the 1524 "Disegnia Antonio" page, that difference is abundantly apparent, both to us and (doubtless) to Michelangelo. But that is not the only ratio on this sheet. When Michelangelo provides two contrasting icons of Madonna and Child—each, via the reversal of the page, partly cancelling the other—he is engaging in his own personal act of pedagogy. There is a long-running debate as to the original purpose of the Madonnas on this sheet. Those who have searched after the conventional teleologies for Michelangelo drawings have been stymied by the fact that these sketches appear to have been made for a prospective relief in marble, whereas the only Madonna of this period that was actually produced was the three-dimensional work in the Medici Chapel. It has also been noticed that these drawings make references that go all the way back to Donatello and to Michelangelo's own early Madonnas, while having aspects in common with a large cartoon of a *Madonna lactans*, with which the sheet is probably contemporary. For some who have considered this wide range of possibilities, the best answer has been that Michelangelo simply produced these for the purpose of giving Mini an exercise.[35] My answer is, rather, all of the above. He is thinking about the (future) Medici Madonna, about Donatello, about his own past work, and perhaps about various other commissions that have been associated with these sketches. And he is passing his own ideas around in the studio. Then, as now, the teaching exercise is also, ideally, an exercise in educating the teacher. The lesson of the page for us, however, lies in the insight it provides into how Michelangelo exercised his own creative life in public.

This is a story about blurred boundaries—between business and art, between instruction and inspiration, between apprentice and master—and about the ways in which all this indefinition circulates around Michelangelo. But things get even blurrier. "Disegnia Antonio," given its relatively authoritarian voice and given the exalted subject matter of the exercise in question, leaves the power structure of the workshop intact. Other drawings offer different glimpses of these relationships, however. If Michelangelo was nursing ambitions for a great mid-career Madonna that would subsume and surmount earlier efforts and if he was choosing to channel these ambitions through the medium of the classroom, no such intention can be ascribed to the many eyes or the salamander on Figures 6-3 and 6-5. Neither eyes nor hair nor profile heads—nor, for that matter, monsters—needed to be worked out for the grand purpose of some public project; they are, rather, artifacts of the studio, variously situated on a continuum from pedagogical to competitive to collaborative. Which may help us understand the one component of this sheet that we have so far not considered: the writing (Figure 6-19).



6-19. Detail of Figure 6-3

The text itself—*Andra* [or *Andrea*] *qua* [or *quar*] four times, always in red chalk; and *Andrea abbi patientia* | *ame me cõsolatione asai* in black chalk—is not difficult to make out. But it opens a small abyss of quandaries. Clearly, more than one handwriting is involved; at the very least, the second *Andrea quar* does not belong to Michelangelo, though it has been located precisely under the first (which does), in such a way as to suggest that it was intentionally patterned after what was written above. It is also apparent that these references, whoever wrote them and for whatever purpose, introduce another member of the Michelangelo circle. Apart from youth, Andrea Quaratesi (Figure 6-20) seems to have had little in common with Pietro Urbano or Antonio Mini: he was the scion of an important banking family with which Michelangelo transacted business; he was, judging from their correspondence, involved in a far more emotive relationship with the Master (whose one extant letter draft includes a poetic fragment on the subject of burning with love); and his association with Michelangelo did not come to a bad end but continued amicably at least until the 1550s.[36] If our documentation about Mini-as-draftsman is sparse, in regard to Quaratesi it is nonexistent: in his letters, he speaks about health, love, and real estate, but he says nothing about art. The fact that the closest thing to a portrait from life by Michelangelo that we possess is a drawing of Quaratesi may say more about the young man's relationship to the Master's artistic production than any suppositions about drawing lessons.

6-20. Michelangelo, portrait of Andrea Quaratesi. *Corpus* 329r. BM 1895-9-15-519. British Museum, London

Be that as it may, the *abbi patientia* sheet locates Quaratesi in the thick of the studio. But where, exactly? Most scholars have placed him there with chalk in hand: so far as the sixteen eyes are concerned, for instance, the latest and most definitive account gives two to Michelangelo, four to Mini, and ten to Quaratesi.[37] This, or some similar division of labors, may be accurate, but the text in no way confirms it. What the text does show is that Michelangelo has written down the young man's name (or even possibly that he has punned on the name, creating a cross between *Andr*[*e*]*a Quar . . .* and *andrà qua*, i.e., "he will come here"), whereupon another person—probably Mini, and certainly not Quaratesi himself—has dutifully copied that name. This might be the first stage in copying out a letter, which we know Mini frequently did for Michelangelo, but those were always more official communications than anything likely to pass between the Master and Quaratesi. More likely, this is (an admittedly curious) calligraphic exercise precisely parallel to the exercises in pictorial work elsewhere on the sheet.

And then we get to the most intriguing part: "Andrea, have patience | love me sufficient consolation." Here, the handwriting experts differ: is it all Michelangelo, all Mini, or half and half? To me, the first line seems almost certainly the hand of Michelangelo, and, given the use of chalk and the positioning of the two lines, I find it difficult to separate them; at the very least, I would say that if these are two different hands, then there has been some deliberate attempt at mirroring between them. But these are quandaries we cannot resolve; and the scholarly hypotheses—for instance, Panofsky's conspiracy theory involving Mini's attempt to forge his Master's handwriting[38]—only serve to indicate the real underlying issues here. This is not, as in the case of "disegnia Antonio," an *ex-cathedra* Michelangelo who is lecturing his underling on the evils of wasting time. This is a Michelangelo who is, as ever, teaching draftsmanship, demonstrating calligraphy, setting exercises, correcting mistakes, and obliterating inferior work, but he is also living his personal experience of love and consolation (whatever that means, exactly) in the studio, and even turning his experience into the material of study. However we imagine the genesis of these enigmatic lines—Is Mini being ordered to copy the name *Andrea Quaratesi*? Does the sheet pass from Michelangelo, who is urging patience, to Quaratesi himself offering a supplicant's response (as he does in some of his letters)? Is the writing neither by Michelangelo nor by Quaratesi but rather by Mini, who is for some reason transcribing the voices of others?—it is clear that the studio is public and private space at once.

Yet another supporting player enters the scene on a double-sided Uffizi page (Figures 6-21, 6-22). The exercise theme in this case is cavorting putti, which have a notable pedigree going back to Donatello and which we have already observed among Michelangelo's sketches on a number of occasions.[39] This is not a sheet covered in pedagogical efforts; still, the verso, with its feebly drawn quartet of cherubs, gives evidence that this page passed through the hands of one or more pupils. The recto, on the other hand, appears to have been a site of solo experimentation by the Master. He took a sheet that was evidently the address portion of a letter sent to his father some decades earlier (judging from the style of the calligraphy), and with pen and brown ink he hastily sketched an almost naked putto who is wearing a sort of grape-festooned helmet and lifting up his transparent chemise. At some other, presumably subsequent, moment, he took black chalk and drew in, among other things, a basin near this figure's foot, thus completing the picture of a urinating baby. Also in black chalk he drew an exquisite doodle of one putto riding on the shoulders of another, while in pen there are some faint lines suggesting an effort at depicting bent legs and bodies. All of these sketches, along with a considerable number of squiggles with the black chalk and point-testing with the pen, clearly testify to the fact that this was a kind of throwaway sheet.

6-21. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 70r. Uffizi 621E. Uffizi, Florence

But the page was turned ninety degrees clockwise (probably, though not certainly, *after* the drawings were done), and in the space under what was now the horizontal putto, Michelangelo composed three lines in a handwriting more polished than any of the pictorial work:

6-22. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 70v. Uffizi 621E. Uffizi, Florence

Valle lochus chlausa toto michi nullus in orbe
Io vi pregho che voi non mi facciate disegniare stasera
perché e' non c'è el Perino

[in Latin:] Vaucluse no place in the world to me
[in Italian:] I beg you not to make me draw this evening
because Perino isn't here

Once again, the layout of text raises intriguing questions about *sequitur* and *non sequitur*, though in this case there is no doubt that it is all Michelangelo. "Perino" almost certainly refers

to Gherardo Perini, yet another of the Master's young male friends whose story presents yet another case of tantalizingly spotty documentation. Once again, we have several of his letters to Michelangelo and only one answer.[40] On the young man's side, as with Quaratesi, there are many formulas of affection whose precise sincerity is difficult to gauge; perhaps the most striking indicator is his repeated concern lest any reply of Michelangelo's fall into the wrong hands, though it is unclear what indiscretion was worrying him. So far as Michelangelo's one letter is concerned, again the terms of affection are relatively formulaic, but it is notable that the artist adopts an unusually playful tone, placing an otiose adjective ("al prudente giovane . . .") in the address portion of the letter, dating it "the I-don't-know-which day of February, according to my maid," and signing it with the winged circles that we considered in Chapter Three.

Our other pieces of information come from one relatively reliable and one relatively unreliable source. Vasari tells us that Michelangelo gave Perini, "who was very much his friend . . . three sheets with some divine heads in black chalk" (hence the phrase *teste divine*), which have been identified with the *Damned Soul*, the *Zenobia*, and a sheet with three female heads.[41] It is interesting that the latter two include efforts at sketching on the verso, perhaps representing the hand of a pupil who could be Perini; if so, that is the only indication that his connection to Michelangelo involved artistic instruction, since (as with Quaratesi) the documentation says nothing on this subject. Pietro Aretino confirms the gift of the drawings in his previously mentioned insinuating letter of 1545 attacking Michelangelo for not having presented him with some of his artwork, declaring with heavy innuendo that such boons have been granted only to certain "Tomasos and Gherardos."[42]

So once again, the decade is the 1520s, the figure associated with Michelangelo is a quite young man, the terms of the relationship are affectionate, and, in one way or another, drawing is involved. In this instance, the young man is apparently essential in order that Michelangelo spend his obligatory time with the sketchpad: "I beg you not to make me draw this evening, since Perino isn't here." Who this compulsion-wielding *you* might be, indeed whether it is a third party at all or rather the artist's own internal mechanisms, we cannot say.[43] What is clear is that Michelangelo is reversing, or at least recalibrating, the dynamic of the studio: it is not the teacher who must be present in order for the student to learn, it is the young man who must be there to inspire the Master. Perino is not so much pupil as muse.

But this highly occasional utterance has been almost seamlessly attached to something completely different. "Valle locus clausa toto mihi nullus in orbe" ("Vaucluse, a place like no other in all the world to me") is the opening line of a set of Petrarch distichs, which first appeared in the *Familiari* as part of a letter to the poet's friend Philippe of Cavaillon.[44] It is, apart from one line of a prayer (see above, Figure 5-21), the only piece of Latin that Michelangelo ever wrote on a drawing, and as such it could hardly be less consistent with the writing that follows it. The poem was, however, in wide circulation, and the fact that it was regularly appended to the *Rime*, both in manuscript and in print, doubtless explains the artist's familiarity with it. His Latin, though small, was probably sufficient for him to find, as he did with so many of Petrarch's Italian verses, a set of personal resonances:

Valle locus Clausa toto michi nullus in orbe
Gratior aut studiis aptior ora meis.
Valle puer Clausa fueram iuvenemque reversum
Fovit in aprico vallis amena sinu.
Valle vir in Clausa meliores dulciter annos

Exegi et vite candida fila mee.
Valle senex Clausa supremum ducere tempus
Et Clausa cupio, te duce, Valle mori.

Vaucluse, no place in the world is dearer to me and none more pleasing and appropriate for my studies.
At Vaucluse I spent my childhood and when I returned as a youth, the charming valley nourished me in its sunny bosom.
At Vaucluse I sweetly lived the best years of my manhood and the happiest time of my life.
At Vaucluse as an old man I wish to live the final time of my life and, under your protection, to die at Vaucluse.

Even the hastiest of glances down these lines will reveal the sequence *puer*, *vir*, *senex*, which describes the full arc of life—a subject dear to Michelangelo's poetic consciousness—in relation to a numinous and adored place.

But why Perino, why the putto, why the Vaucluse? It is worth noting a comparable conjunction on a drawing that has recently been accepted into the canon and acquired by the Getty Museum (Figures 6-23, 6-24).[45] The recto is a highly polished (perhaps *too* polished?) rendering of the *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*. The verso consists of some quite brilliant sketches of cavorting cherubs, including one holding his penis and another pair that are superimposed on one another, in analogous postures to those on the Perino sketch. Above this stretch of figures, Michelangelo has written *Tempo verrà ancor*. The line is taken from another of Petrarch's most widely read poems, the canzone "Chiare fresche et dolci acque" (*Rime* 126), perhaps the supreme *locus classicus* on the subject of searching for the absent beloved in a beautiful, but empty landscape.[46] "*There will come a time* perhaps when to her accustomed sojourn the lovely, gentle wild one will return": such is the complete thought, which Michelangelo has universalized by quoting only the opening words.

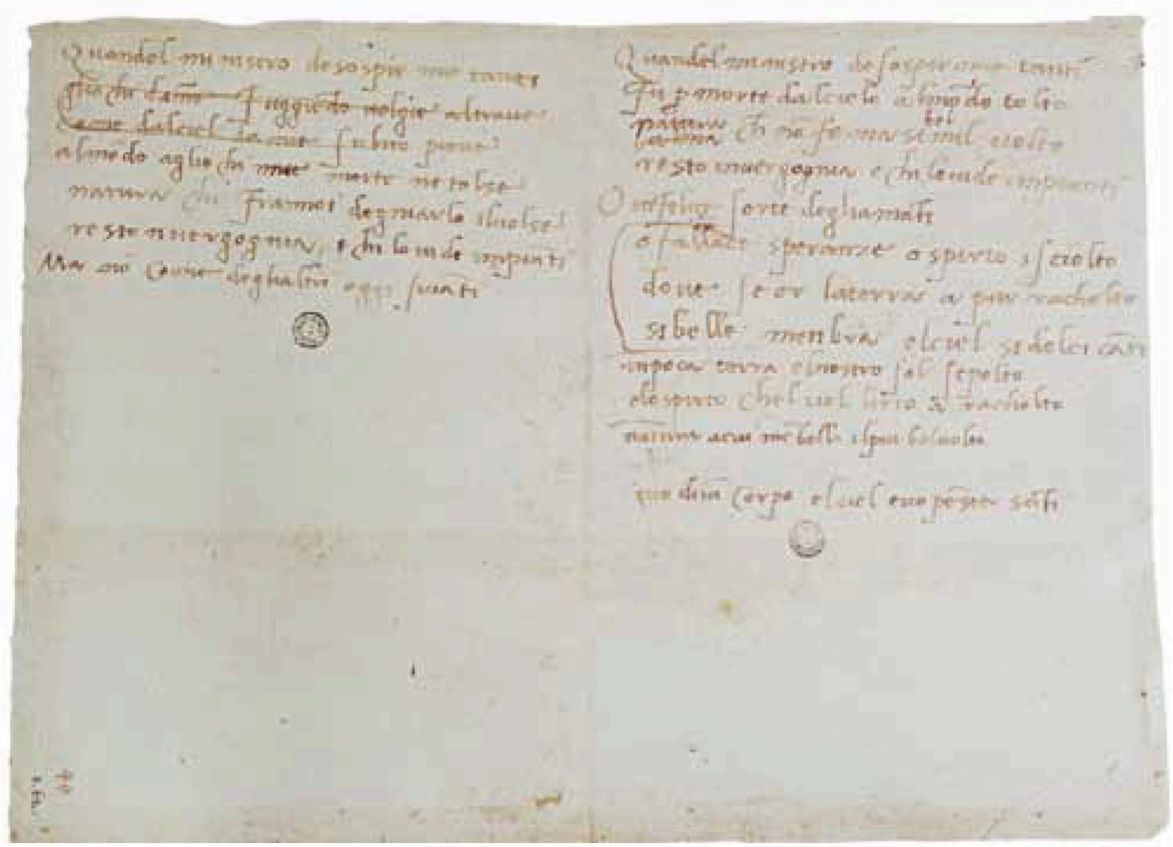
6-23. Michelangelo, drawing of the Holy Family with the infant Saint John the Baptist (r). J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

The Petrarchan mood in both cases is defined by loss: in the Latin poem, he maintains his own persona but longs for the place of origin that will complete it, while in the Italian poem he possesses the place but longs for the individual (not himself, in this instance) who has ceased to inhabit it. It would be possible to twist the strand of parallels and contrasts too tightly: Petrarch is actually in Italy, the first place from which he was exiled, and longing to be back in France, from which he feels himself a second exile; Michelangelo feels exiled even when in his (and, technically, Petrarch's) hometown. But the underlying issue is an unwanted solitude and a self-alienation defined by a notion of home so transcendent that no real place, even the actual birthplace fifty years after the event, can satisfy the need. To spend time drawing in the company of Perino somehow fulfills the longed for combination of person and place; to draw without Perino is by contrast a painful and meaningless exercise. Putti who are drawn with a few casual strokes and who are depicted as engaged in bathetic activities reveal themselves to be the residue of a noble and affectionate activity of *disegno* that has been emptied of purpose.

There is, of course, another activity that might serve Michelangelo's turn when absence or loss prevents him from drawing—an activity that is, in fact, fueled by absence and loss. The composing of phrases like *ame me cōsolazione assai* or the quoting of Petrarch is, as we saw in Chapter Five, a significant step toward the production of his own poetry; and it is clear that the decade or so which sees Michelangelo in the ambiguous company of these young men, in addition to producing a flood of didactically-related draftsmanship, also provides the emotional sustenance that will nourish many years of his work in verse. We might be tempted to think of these as quite separate, or even contradictory, activities: the pedagogical drawings reveal the

studio to be a sociable space, whereas poetry requires a rigorous solitude. But poetry and drawing need to be seen in parallel as well as in opposition. Though it is clear from all these visual and verbal messages that Michelangelo found collective artistic activity to be an antidote to solitude, it is equally clear from the oblique and emotional nature of the communications that the studio nevertheless represented society in its most intimate and exclusive sense. Correspondingly, Michelangelo's poetry, even at its most passionate and self-revelatory, always partook of what was at least the fantasy that it would reach some kind of public—even if only a public of one.

6-24. Michelangelo, drawing of amorous putti at play, head of a bird (v). J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles



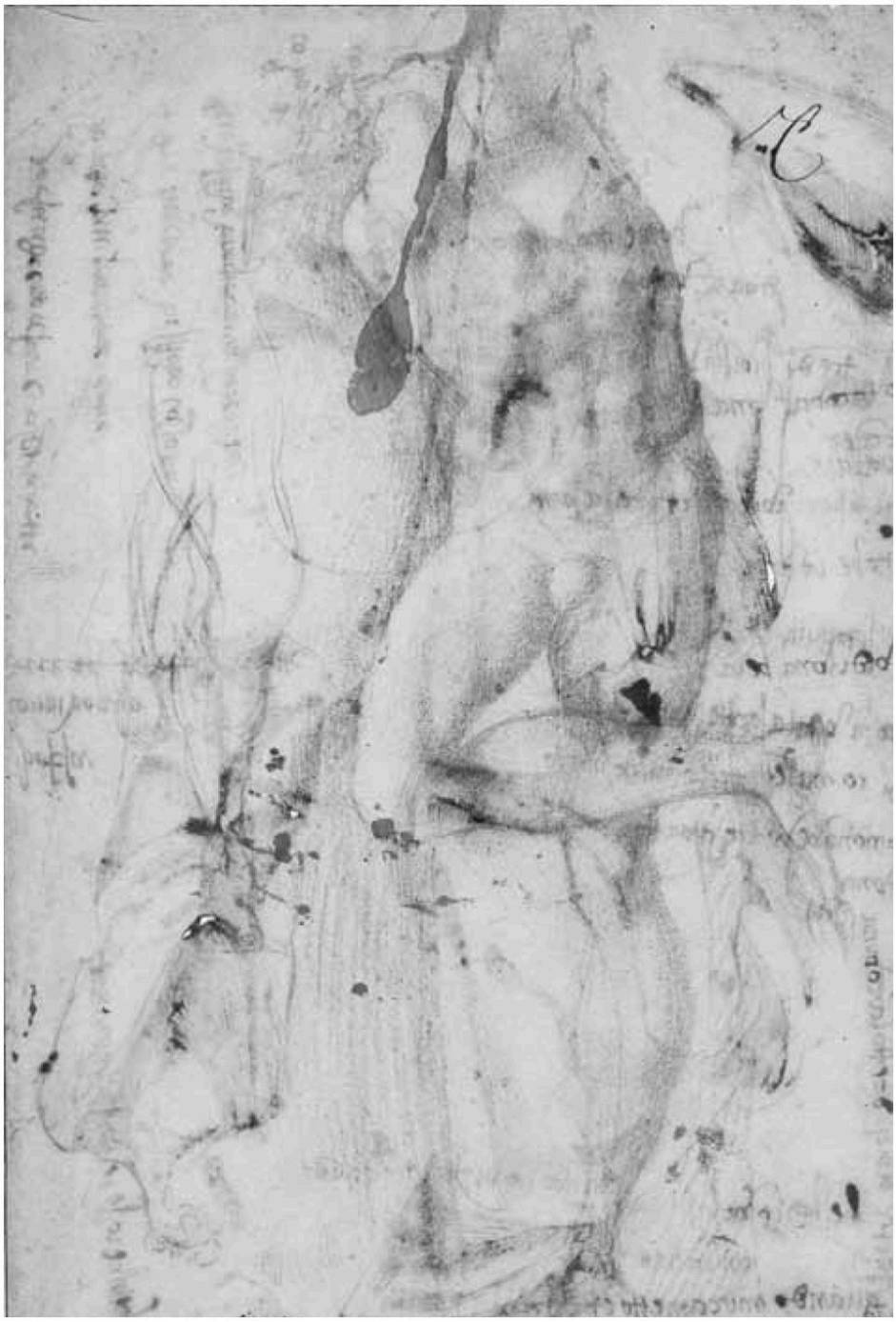
6-25. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 312r. Archivio Buonarroti XIII fol. 145. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

6-26. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 312v. Archivio Buonarroti XIII fol. 145. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

It is not surprising, then, that poetry does turn up on these shared pages. We have already observed in Chapter Two (see Figure 2-13) how a draft of the madrigal "Amor non già" (G31) kept company with drawings, scribblings, and annotations that could be credited to both Master and assistants. The recto of another sheet (Figures 6-25, 6-26) contains two drafts of a sonnet lamenting a death—the person in question, and therefore the date, uncertain—while the verso includes a variety of sketches whose subject matter and duplication suggest that it was being used for drawing exercises.[47] Even more decisive, perhaps, is a sheet of drawings

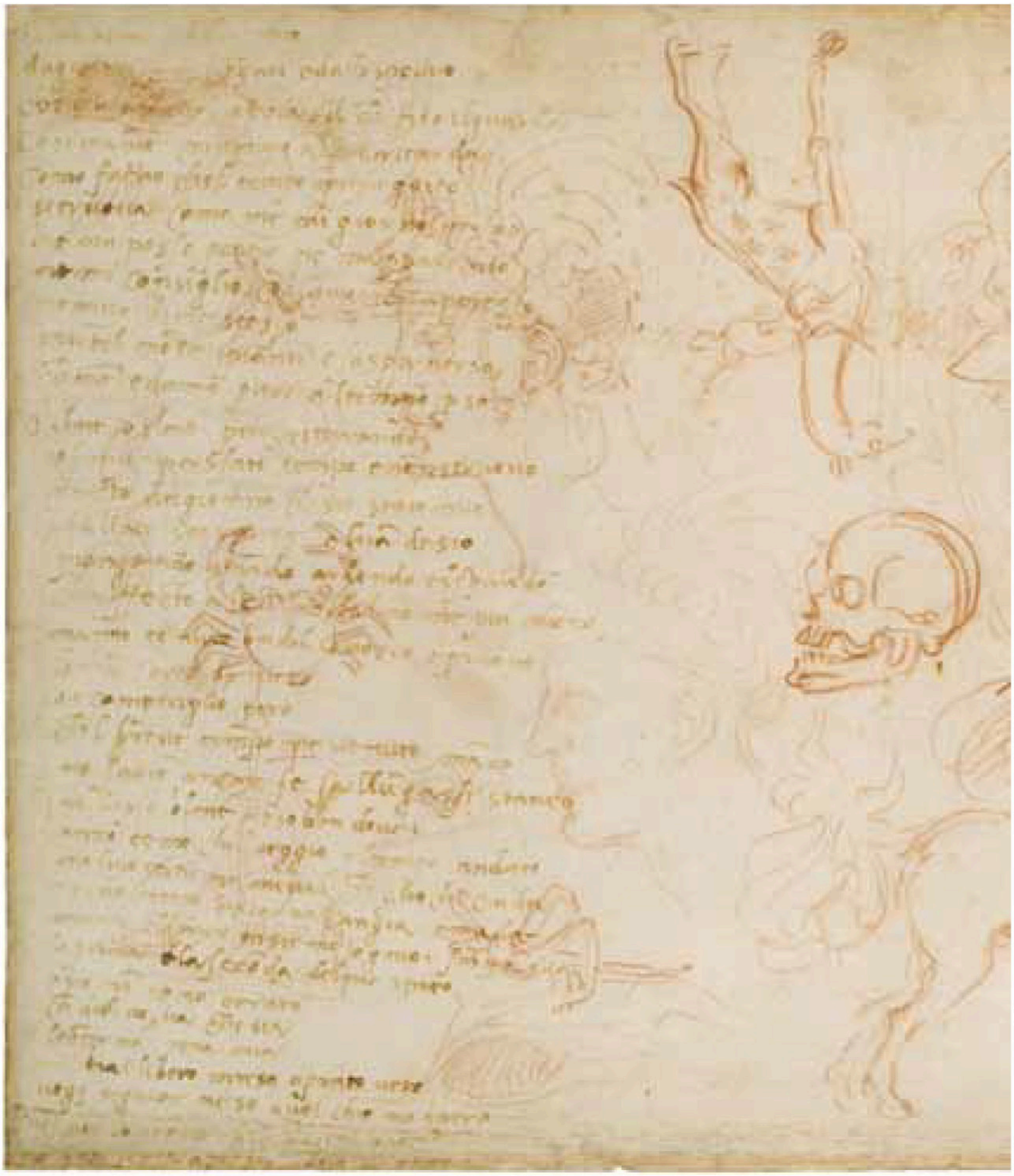
(Figures 6-27, 6-28) associated with the Slaves that formed part of the Julius Tomb project: both the sketches and the handwriting have been widely credited to Mini.[48] The text on the verso in this instance has nothing to do with the kind of business records that Mini normally composed for his Master; rather it is a set of poetic fragments, including phrases like "io mi voglio prova agiocho delle cartte" ("I wish to try my luck at cards"), "vidi una bella" ("I saw a beautiful woman"), and "io mi sentte tutto consolato" ("I feel altogether contented"). The circumstances of the production of this sheet are as unknowable as they are intriguing. Ruling out the possibility that Mini was trying his own hand at poetry, we can only guess under precisely what circumstances he would have been copying out bits of his Master's love lyrics as he rotated the sheet in all four orientations. What is clear is that, at least on certain occasions, Michelangelo's verses were being disseminated through the studio at the same time and in the same manner as his visual inventions.

The most striking instance of this kind of transmission appears in Michelangelo's own handwriting, and it takes us back to Figure 6-4 (Figure 6-29, detail). When we considered its wild riot of drawings, we deliberately neglected to observe that the images in one-third of the space, including locks of hair, a crab, a grasshopper, and half of the profile face that is generally credited to the Master, are all but indecipherable because that part of the page also contains some thirty-five neatly formed lines of verse. The order of composition is tantalizingly uncertain. Most recent scholarship places the poem first and the sketches second[49]; I would argue for the contrary sequence, both for physical reasons, since there are places where the ink of the writing appears to have been affected by a pre-existing line of red chalk rather than vice versa, and for the logical reason that the presence of text would have so thoroughly masked any subsequent sketching efforts in the same space as to make it impossible either to produce or to view the drawing that was in competition with it. Faced with this sort of quandary, I tend to bracket the unanswerable and to see what conclusions we can draw independently of establishing temporal priority.



6-27. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 296r. Louvre 696. Louvre, Paris

6-28. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 296v. Louvre 696. Louvre, Paris



6-29. Detail of Figure 6-4

Here, then, is a sheet whose visual production reflects at its fullest all the dynamic interplay of life in the studio (for the full drawing, see Figure 6-4). The subject matters range from the noblest classical forms to something resembling the graffitti on bathroom walls. The skill sets range from genius to incompetent. And, perhaps most important of all, the modalities by which inventions are generated range through all the traditional categories of *imitatio*, from slavish copy to parody to fantastical new creation—thinking, for instance, of such metamorphic interconnections as the lock of hair that attaches itself to the horse's tail or the curves that become the pseudo-giraffe or the strange isomorphism that relates the possibly mooning acrobat to the hand holding a globe in the facing corner of the page. It is, in other words, the map for a certain vision of *disegno* as something like pure creativity, not dependent

on the marketplace—since none of these forms (*pace* scholarly efforts suggesting otherwise) is on its way to realization in marble or pigment—and in fact scarcely dependent on the canons of visual mimesis at all. And all of this Horatian liberty, reflecting the oft-quoted lines from the *Ars poetica* on the license of poets and painters to untrammeled invention,[50] is geared to the collaborative, interactive, back-and-forth circulation of the page in the studio.

Then we have the co-tenant of the space, the lyric effusion of a fifty-something man facing death. He begins with the same inarticulate *oilmè*, *oilmè*, *oilmè* that appeared in the more primitive verse we observed on the sheet with the horse sketches and the early poems (see Figure 5-28), then proceeds to a denunciation of everything he reflects on in his past life:

> Oilmè, oilmè, pur riterando
> vo 'l mio passato tempo e non ritruovo
> in tutto un giorno che sie stato mio!
> Le fallace speranze e 'l van desio,
> piangendo, amando, ardendo e sospirando
> (c'affetto alcun mortal non m'è più nuovo)
> m'hanno tenuto, ond'il conosco e pruovo,
> lontan certo dal vero.[51]
>
> Alas, alas, though I keep going over my past life, I do not find a single day that has been my own! False hopes and vain desire have kept me weeping, loving, burning and sighing (for no mortal emotion is a stranger to me now), as I well know and daily prove again, far indeed from the true good.

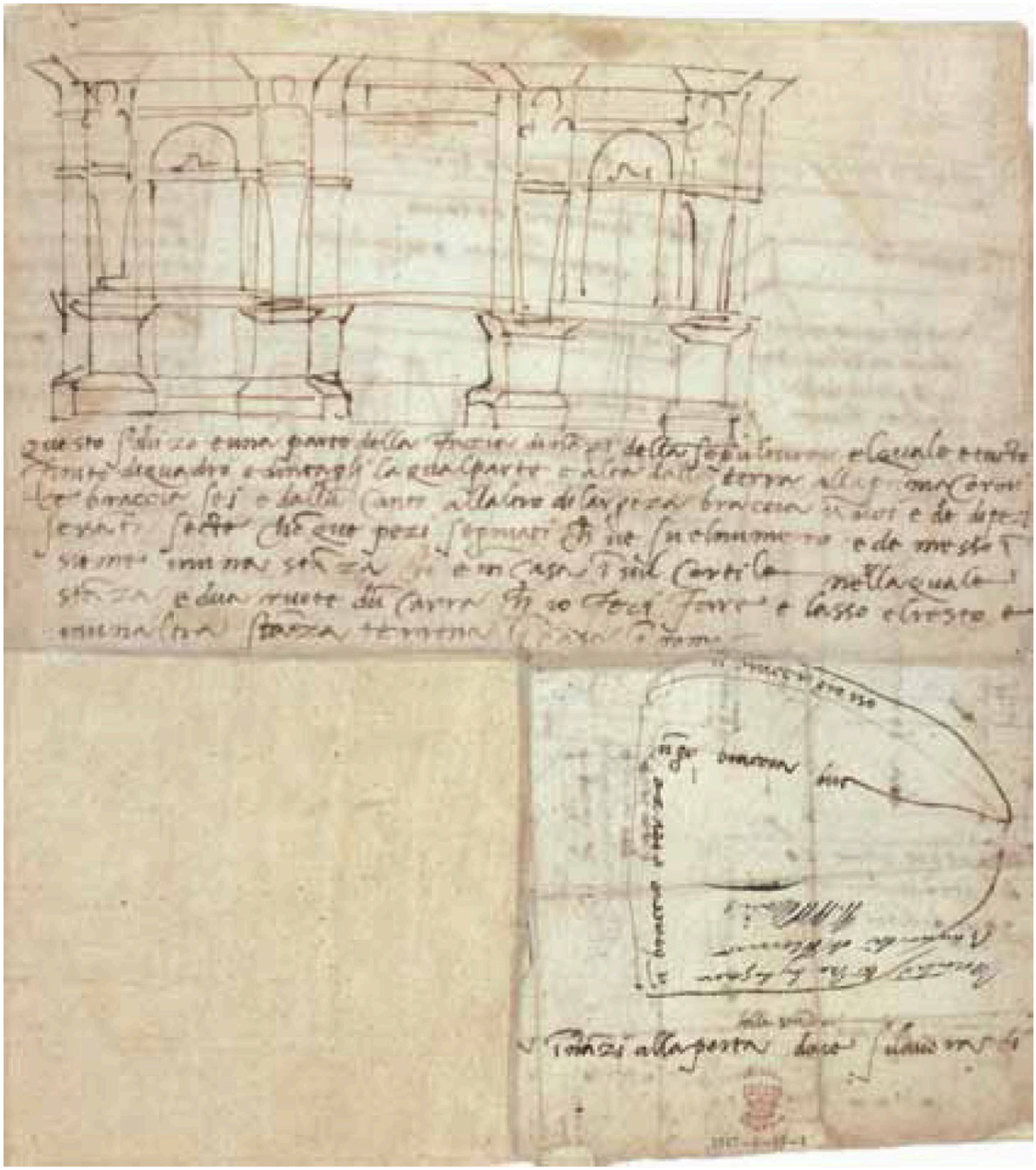
Never mind that this is all Petrarchan pastiche and not nearly Michelangelo's best work in that vein. What we have on this page is a conjunction between the experience of a joyously crowded artistic and personal life and the ritual rejection of precisely that sense of fullness. Perhaps the sheet contained the poem and subsequently got passed through the serendipities of the studio; or perhaps the artistic labors of Master and pupils had already taken place when Michelangelo went back and covered a third of them with the completion of what is likely to have been a pre-existing rough draft from another sheet—since, until the very end, there are no verbal corrections here. Either way, he is living out the paradox of an artistic and affective life among friends as opposed to a sense of obligation before his eternal judge; with that latter perspective in his mind, all this crowded company merely becomes a sign that not a single day has been his own.

But why *should* Michelangelo's days have been his own? By the time he had reached the *mezzo cammin* of his unusually long life, he was the world-famous, highly sought after, and professionally over-committed boss, both artistic and managerial, of an enormous construction enterprise. Monumental church façades and papal tombs don't just build themselves; and it is noteworthy that Michelangelo, for all his famous problems with sociability, concentrated his career on every form of artistic production *except* the one—panel paintings—that his contemporaries tended to produce solo. However grave his concerns about standing before his Maker with nothing to show for himself but a lot of dedication to art and an insufficiency of God-fearing solitude, he had committed his life to work that required collaboration.

In effect, Michelangelo was becoming more than anything else a designer of architecture, though that term has to be construed broadly when applied to the present body of work. By the end of his career, with such enterprises as St. Peter's, the church of S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini, and the Palazzo Farnese in the works, Michelangelo was exerting himself in projects

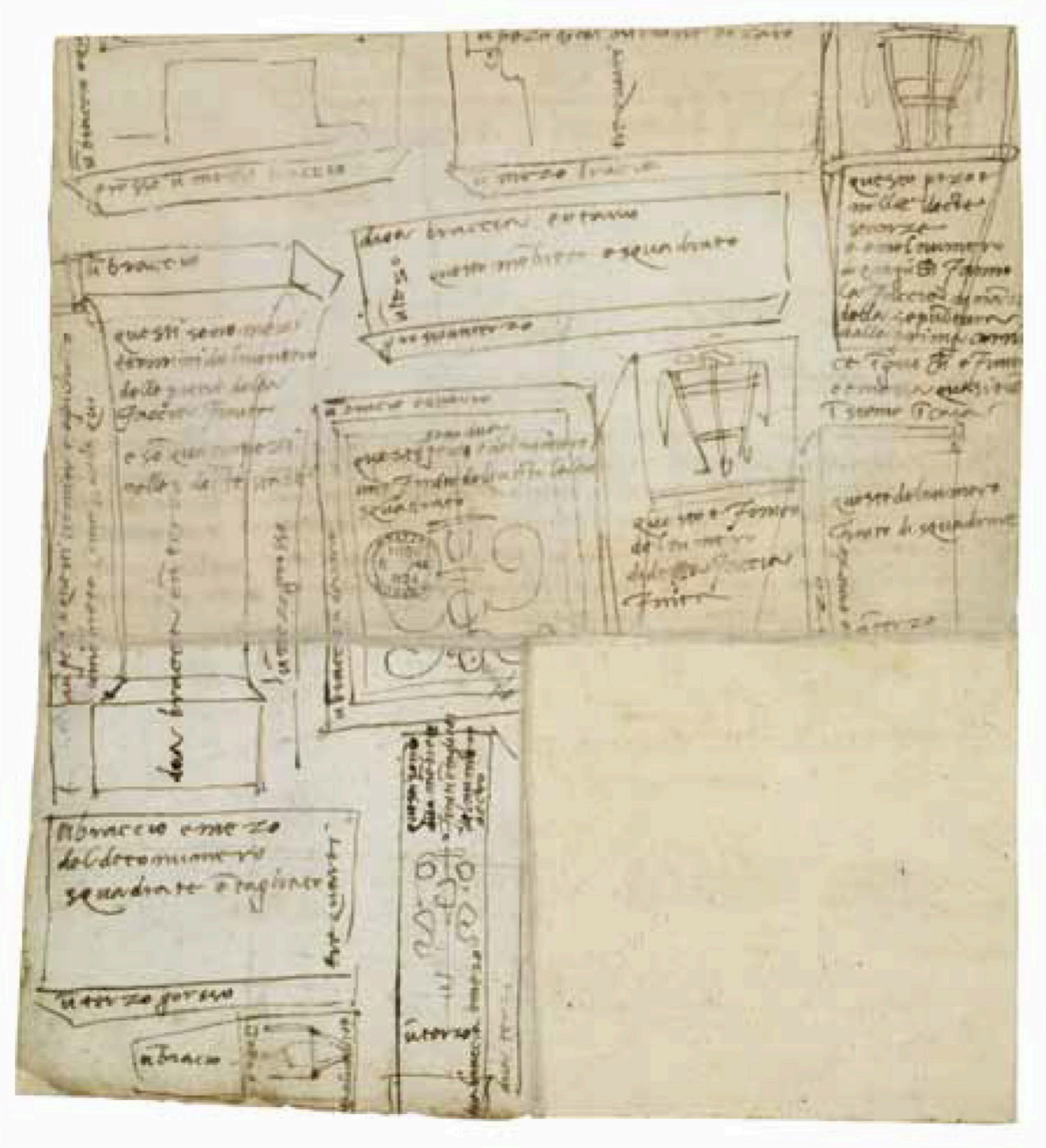
that would fit anyone's definition of large-scale construction. In the earlier decades, we were confronted rather with sculpture that looked like architecture (e.g., projects for the Julius Tomb) or architecture that looked like sculpture (e.g., the Laurentian Library vestibule), or painting that looked like sculpture *and* architecture (the Sistine Ceiling). But whatever generic terminology is appropriate to these undertakings, nearly all involved communication among many collaborating individuals. Which meant inevitably that pieces of paper were being inscribed—and not only in order that the Master could brainstorm or that the studio could engage in some sociable pedagogy. Rather, sheets needed to pass from hand to hand for fundamental, practical purposes: for acquiring raw materials, for communicating artistic conceptions either to patrons or workers, and for directing the artisans at each work site. Moreover, all of this complex, interpersonal enterprise must endure the further pressures of geography, involving as it did contact among persons variously located in Florence, Rome, and the marble quarries of Northern Tuscany.

This turning had the inevitable consequence of bringing different sets of persons into Michelangelo's orbit. As the comparisons to Bandinelli and Raphael may have already suggested, Mini and the rest were not, in the traditional and functional sense, collaborators. Nor do the exercises in draftsmanship that we have so far considered in this chapter have much to do with the production of art, at least in the public sense that Michelangelo's professional status was demanding of him. For that, we will need to consider other classes of collaborators: either those of loftier standing, like patrons, or those who are engaged in the bricks and mortar of construction. Equally important, it produces a different sort of paper trail, including a set of documents that reveal how Michelangelo chose to operate when he had reason to express himself in no uncertain terms.



6-30. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 57r. BM 1859-5-14-824. British Museum, London

And it is this last quality, at least in principle, that makes these drawings stand out from most of the archive we have considered in this book. When Michelangelo lays down on paper some ideas he has for statues and, on the same sheet, writes "David with his slingshot and I with my bow," or when, in close proximity to other figural drawings, he writes a line from a Petrarch poem or a complaint about the absence of Perino or a memo about hauling wood from Casteldurante, the textual matter cannot be said in any fundamental way to be necessary to the artistic job at hand. The writing on the drawings is, in other words, supplementary. Whether or not it was a necessary part of his inward process that he compose words, it was not necessary for the practical purposes of transitioning from marks on a page to completed works of art.



6-31. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 57v. BM 1859-5-14-824. British Museum, London

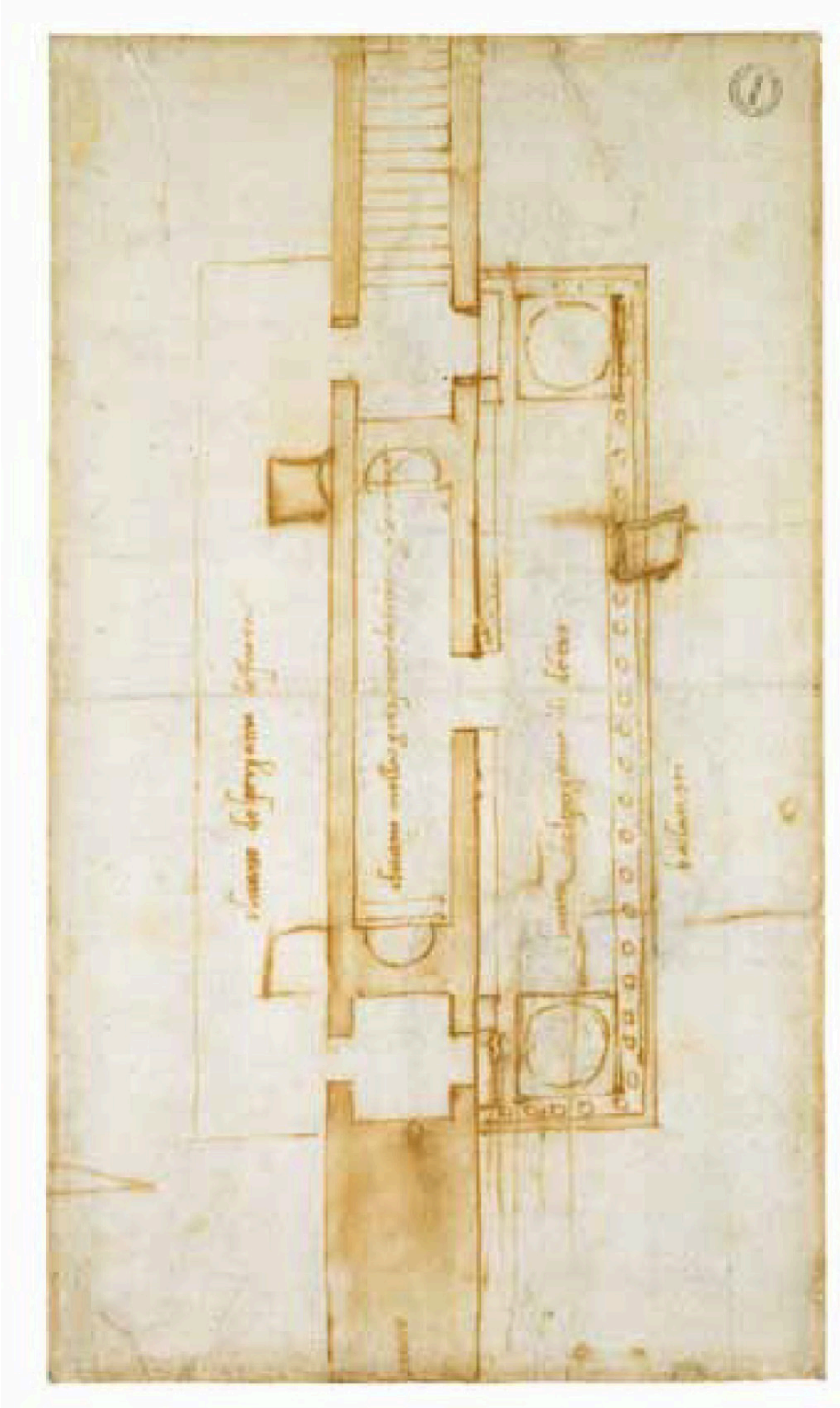
Architectural drawings—particularly the kind that seem intended for some sort of circulation—have an entirely different appearance. We might take as an example a British Museum sheet (Figures 6-30, 6-31) whose recto includes a sketch relative to a certain moment in creating the Julius Tomb.[52] Directly beneath the drawing the artist has written seven lines of explanation beginning, "This sketch is part of the façade in front of the tomb that is all finished blocking and cutting, this part being six *braccia* high from the ground to the first cornice . . . ." The verso communicates in a somewhat different language: rather than a pictorial rendering followed by an explanatory text, the verbal and visual are interwoven in a series of partly diagrammatic and partly perspectival renderings, each of which encloses pieces of written information concerning the dimensions, the placement, or the state of completion of that particular element in the design, all of it quite formally written out. Taking

both sides of the sheet together, we might consider this range of possibilities as a certain kind of norm for an architectural sheet: the drawing "reads" in a clear way that is something between schematic and mimetic, while the text, written with little in the way of calligraphic flourish, explains everything that the picture cannot convey. And we know, in fact, that this particular piece of paper was a crucial token in the long-distance arrangements that passed between the artist in Tuscany and his associate, Leonardo Sellaio, who managed the collecting and the rough hewing of marble blocks in Rome.

6-32. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 508r. Casa Buonarroti 64A. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

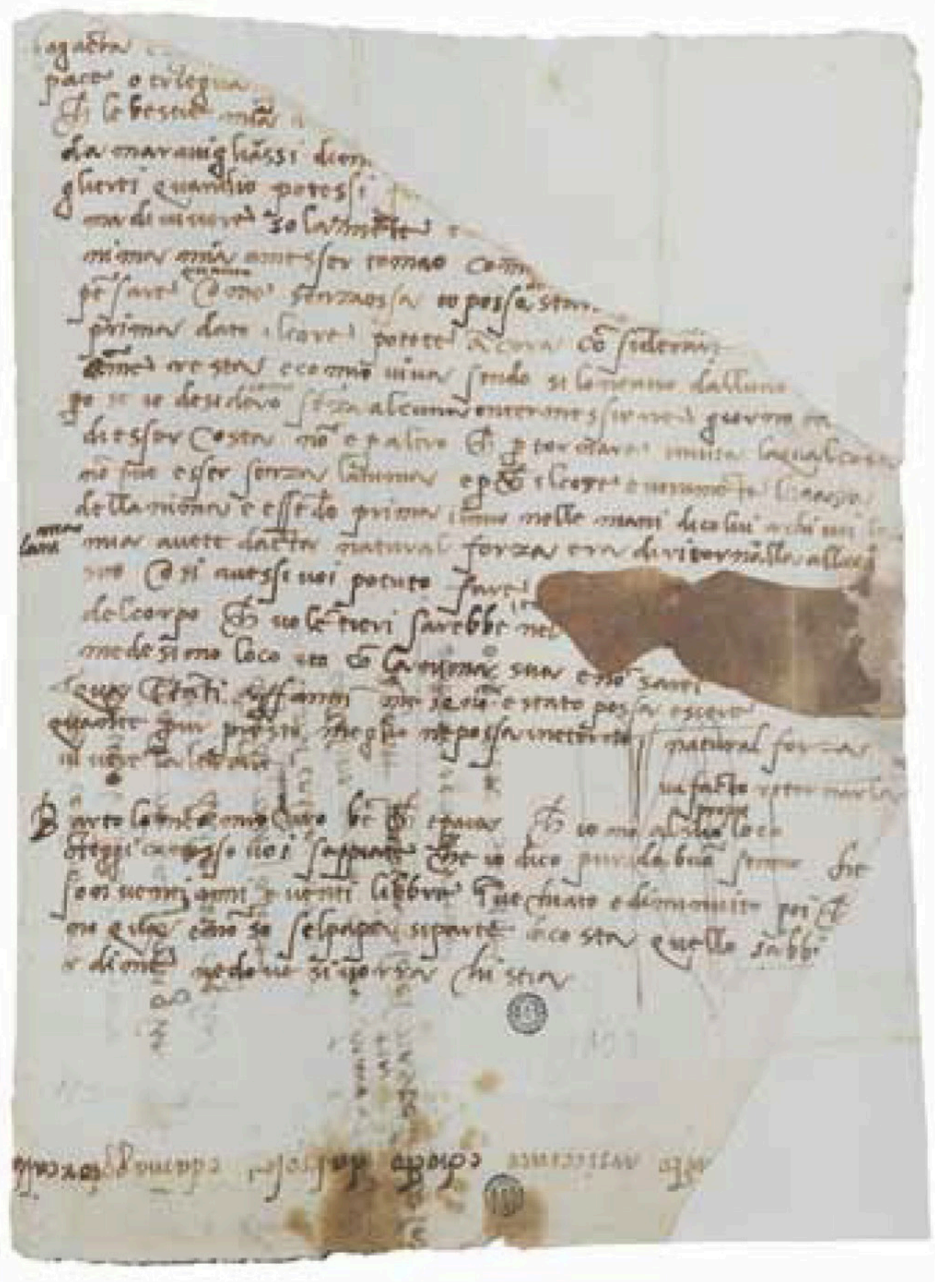
It is clear from this sheet that non-pictorial language is not merely supplementary in an architectural drawing, but necessary. And if that seems too obvious to be worth stating, it should be noted that this necessity has many possible ways of expressing itself, each of which tells us something about the systems of communication into which the drawing is being launched. There is, in short, no single, transparent mode of semiotics on these pages. A Casa Buonarroti sheet (Figure 6-32) will illustrate a somewhat different coordination of text and image.[53] The central representation on the page is a column, presumably for the San Lorenzo façade. But the issue for the artist is not so much the appearance of the column as it is the precision with which the drawing must be translated into the work. Not only does he write out the exact dimensions in height and girth, each of them inside the column, the former vertically and the latter horizontally; he also includes, to the left and right of the column, two measurements in real space: *el braccio picholo* ("the small *braccio*") and *questa linea è un terzo del braccio Fiorentino* ("this line is one-third of the Florentine *braccio*"), each next to a line of the appropriate length. And we have the clearest possible evidence that this communication was dutifully received: for directly under the *braccio fiorentino*, someone else has written: *Questo hè il terzo ch[e] m^{o} Michelangelo hae dessignato et dato a Matheo di Cuccarello et alli suoi compagni* ("this is the third that Messer Michelangelo has drawn and given to Matteo di Cuccarello and his colleagues"). This sheet of paper, in other words, is not merely (like most drawings) a representation, but rather the thing itself, the actual 1:1 measure that must be used in construction; and this status is grounded in an appeal to Michelangelo's all but transcendent authority, which furnishes here an inviolable standard in a world where every village had its own measuring system.[54]

The representation systems of such drawings may vary when different kinds of recipients are intended. In the case, for instance, of an Ashmolean sheet (Figures 6-33, 6-34) containing a floorplan, the artist is not conversing with builders or assistants.[55] His choices rather reflect a long history of intricate negotiations with Pope Clement concerning the housing for San Lorenzo's relics; hence, the careful drawing, elegant shading, and explicit captioning (e.g., *il vano nella grossezza del muro per le reliquie*), each piece of text inscribed within its respective space. But what is true in all these instances is that Michelangelo expresses himself in an idiom of purposeful articulation. Whether the document is an instructional manual or a sales pitch, it manages to communicate with its respective audience by a logical integration of the verbal and the visual. Such sheets are, in a sense, the architectural equivalent of the picture-writing that we considered in Chapter Three, where image and word operated in a logically enclosed system; and it is noteworthy here that it is the artist's public persona—the requirement that he meet the needs of his collaborators, in the broadest sense of the term—which anchors this kind of verbal and visual presentation on paper.



6-33. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 260r. Ashmolean 311. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

6-34. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 260v. Ashmolean 311. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford



6-35. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 562r. Archivio Buonarroti V, fol. 67. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

But this sort of balance is as precarious in the realm of architecture as it was in the realm of figure. We need look no further than the verso of the reliquary groundplan to be reminded of the flux of categories in Michelangelo's productive life. The work in pen, brush, and wash on the recto gives every evidence of being presentable (whether literally presented or not) to a client. For the verso, on the other hand, the artist switched to the more ephemeral medium of black chalk and undertook one of his most problematic subjects. We possess some sixteen *Risen Christ* drawings, most of which reveal radical indecision about the composition of the figure; in this case, for instance, there are two heads and two different positions of the arm. But the curious relation between the two sides of the sheet tells a further tale of instability. On the one hand, perfectly finished architecture; on the other, figural work under revision. Yet it is impossible to overlook the unexpected congruence of recto and verso: the *Risen Christ* has been squared for some form of transfer, and thus it fits nearly perfectly inside the San Lorenzo

outlines on the recto, almost as though they concurrently represented a block of marble from which the statue would be carved. Whatever the significance of such a juxtaposition, it reminds us that, despite its practical utility in creating tokens that could be passed from hand to hand, orderly communication of the kind sent to Leonardo Sellaio or composed for Pope Clement does not always come naturally to Michelangelo-the-architect.

As might be expected, it is noteworthy that most of the non-architectural materials that find their way onto these pages, do *not* fit so neatly inside the frame. Some of this effusion is in the mode of the random, or not so random, juxtaposition we have seen elsewhere. Architectural drawings appear in the company of letters,[56] or on sheets that include lists of transactions and expenses,[57] generally without any sense of strong connection between the particular project Michelangelo is sketching and the business that he is recording. They also crop up in the company of ardent poetic utterance, for instance (Figures 6-35, 6-36)[58] when a couple of gables and pediments, thought to belong to the San Lorenzo façade, are sketched on the back of a letter to Bartolommeo Angiolini full of passionate words about Tommaso Cavalieri and directly beneath lyric fragments including phrases like "Amor così mi tiene | ne vuol che altro brami se a te non assomiglia . . ." and "arsicciato e cotto dal sole e da' maggior caldi . . ." ("Love holds me so, nor do I wish to long for another unless he resembles you . . . "; "dried and cooked by the sun and by greater heats . . .").

6-36. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 562v. Archivio Buonarroti V, fol. 67. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

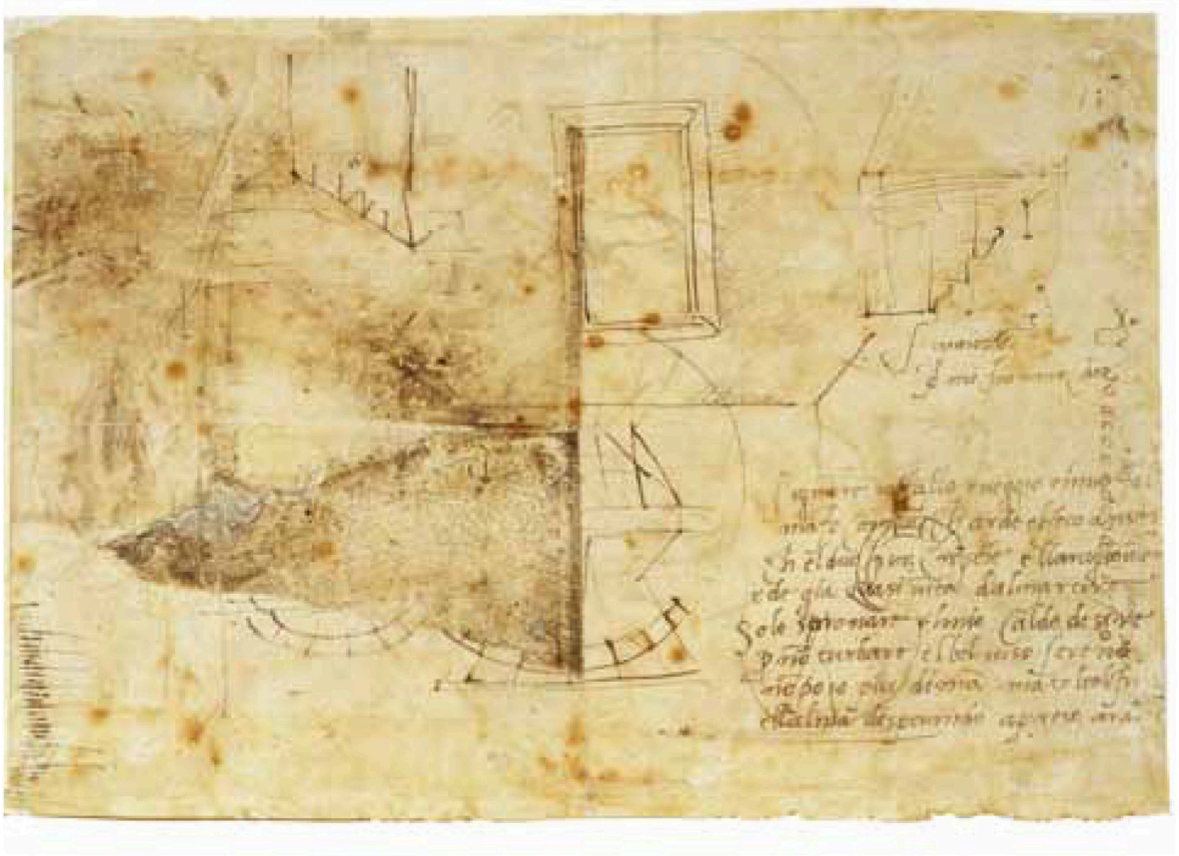
6-37. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 601r. Ashmolean 344. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

6-38. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 358v. BM 1895-9-15-502. British Museum, London

At other times, there seems a sort of unintended personal logic to the verbal-visual mix, as might be suggested by various drawings relative to cupolas and the supporting constructions under them (Figure 6-37) on a sheet that began with the draft of a letter about the difficulties of building St. Peter's dome, or the elaborate, perhaps impossible to execute, cornice (Figure 6-38), which appears on a cut-down page whose text includes the statement *e none basta lanimo p[er] che no[n] sono architector* ("I do not have the courage because I am not an architect"). [59] And then there are wholly personal and unresolvable incongruities. A sheet (Figure 6-39) with a particularly motley miscellany of architectural work, some or all of it perhaps done by assistants, also contains the beginning of a letter (*Fantuzzi, Amicho mio caro . . .*) and eight verse lines adapted from Petrarch (*Rime* 236). On another page (Figure 6-40), in perfect parallel to the right-hand line of a gorgeously drawn tabernacle and in his best calligraphy, Michelangelo has written: *pasuino sei coppie di cacio e quaranta pere*—a memo, evidently, relative to his mule driver and the transport of twelve cheeses and forty pears.[60]

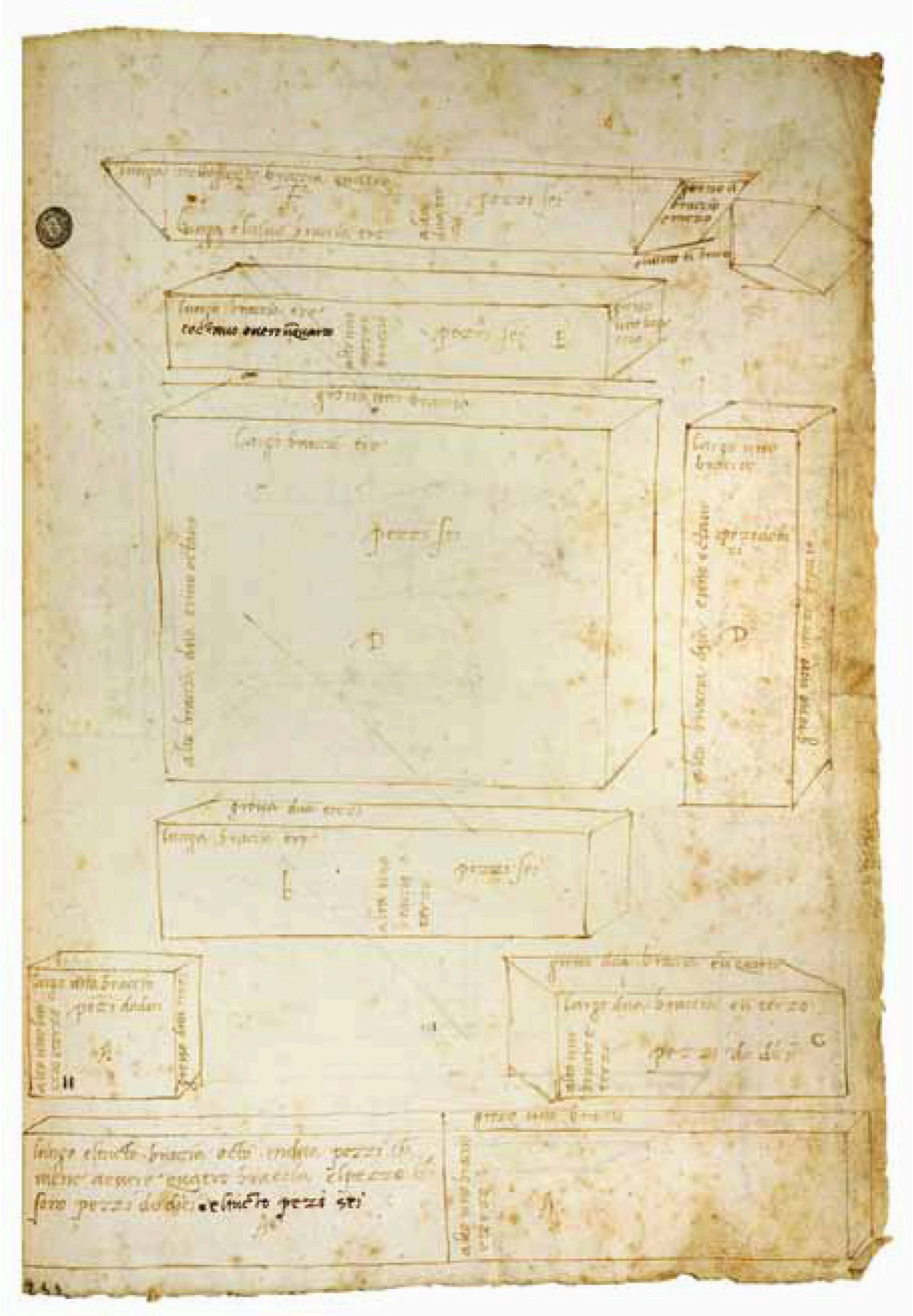
But there are subtler ways that Michelangelo's practices evade or exceed the necessities of practical signification, even where nothing but architecture appears on the page. We possess something like fifty sheets on which Michelangelo has drawn nothing more or less than representations of blocks of marble, rendered perspectivally in three dimensions and including, among other things, precise measurements (Figures 6-41, 6-42). Many of these pages served essentially as purchase orders, grouped in notebooks and shipped to the quarry sites so that the artist's deputies would know exactly what size and quantity of slabs they needed to hew from the rock faces; a smaller group seems to have represented blocks that had already been

procured but needed to be checked off once they made their transit down-river to the workshop. Perhaps no set of drawings in



6-39. *(above)* Michelangelo, *Corpus* 626v. Casa Buonarroti 6A. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

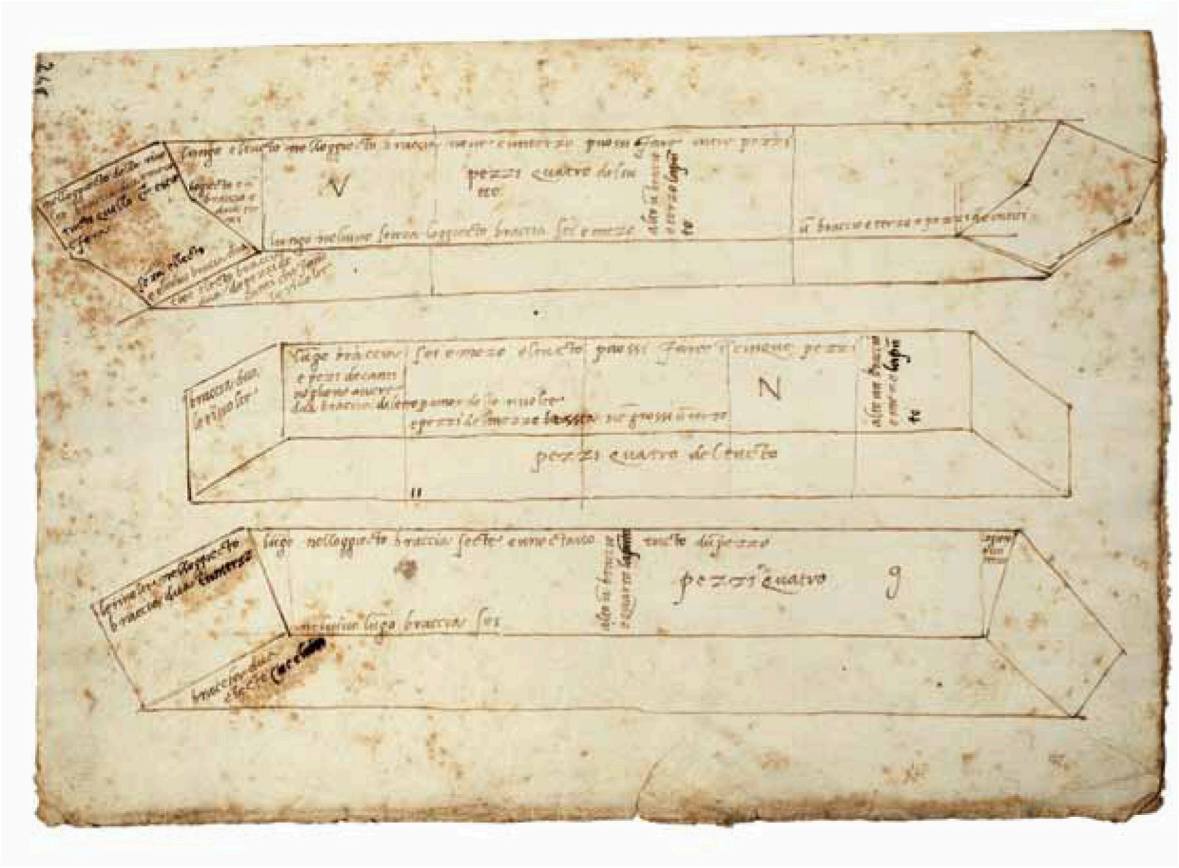
6-40. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 595v. Lille Musée Wicar 93-94. Palais des Beaux Arts, Lille, France



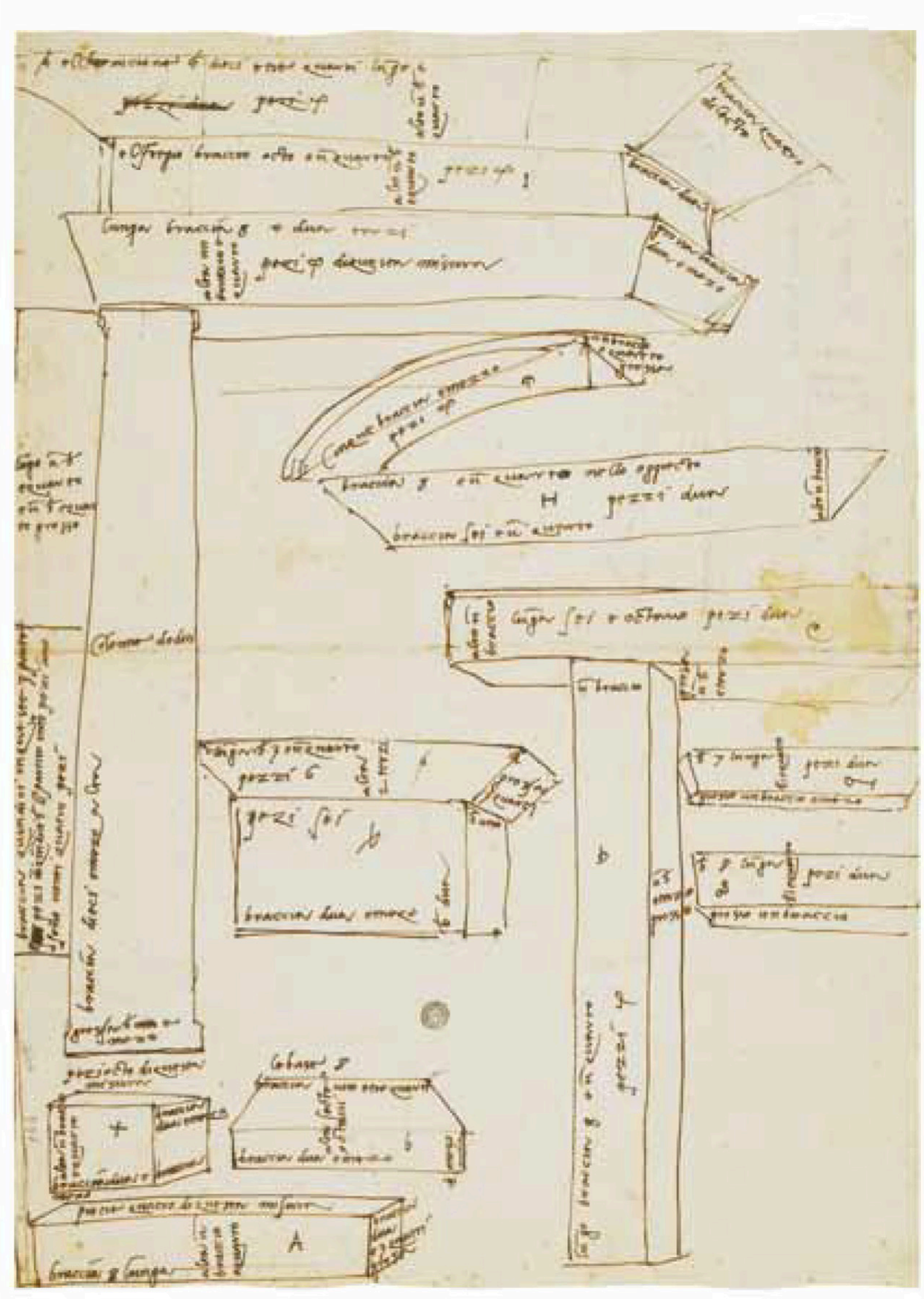
6-41. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 441r. Archivio Buonarroti vol. 1, 128, fol. 243. Venice Gallery of the Academy. Courtesy of the Ministry of Heritage and Cultural Activities

the whole archive required more precise and accurate information, and on these pages Michelangelo reveals himself to be every bit the meticulous manager we have observed in his voluminous activity of purely verbal record-keeping.[61]

Yet if we expect these practicalities to result in a perfect balance of the verbal and visual, we have some surprises in store. In the first place, these pages turn out to be overwhelmingly linguistic in their communicative structures. It is not just the preponderance of text that produces this impression, with every block repeating the words *largo*, *alto*, and *grosso*, each of them written in its appropriate direction on the relevant face of the image, and each with the relevant dimension written out in words. It is also the fact that, even though these pages are covered in diagrams, they do not, for the most part, communicate visually. The block of marble is not drawn to scale, either within its own shape or in relation to other blocks; and, for all the precision of management that is implied here, the renderings would be all but useless to an addressee who could not read the words "lungo braccia cinque e dua terzi possonsi fare in dua pezzi l'uno ch[e] sarebono ventiquatro pezi e a fargli d'u[n] pezzo sarebo[n] o dodici ch[e] chosì àn[n]o a esere," but hoped to manage by some sort of ocular reckoning.



6-42. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 443r. Archivio Buonarroti I 130, fol. 245. Casa Buonarroti, Florence



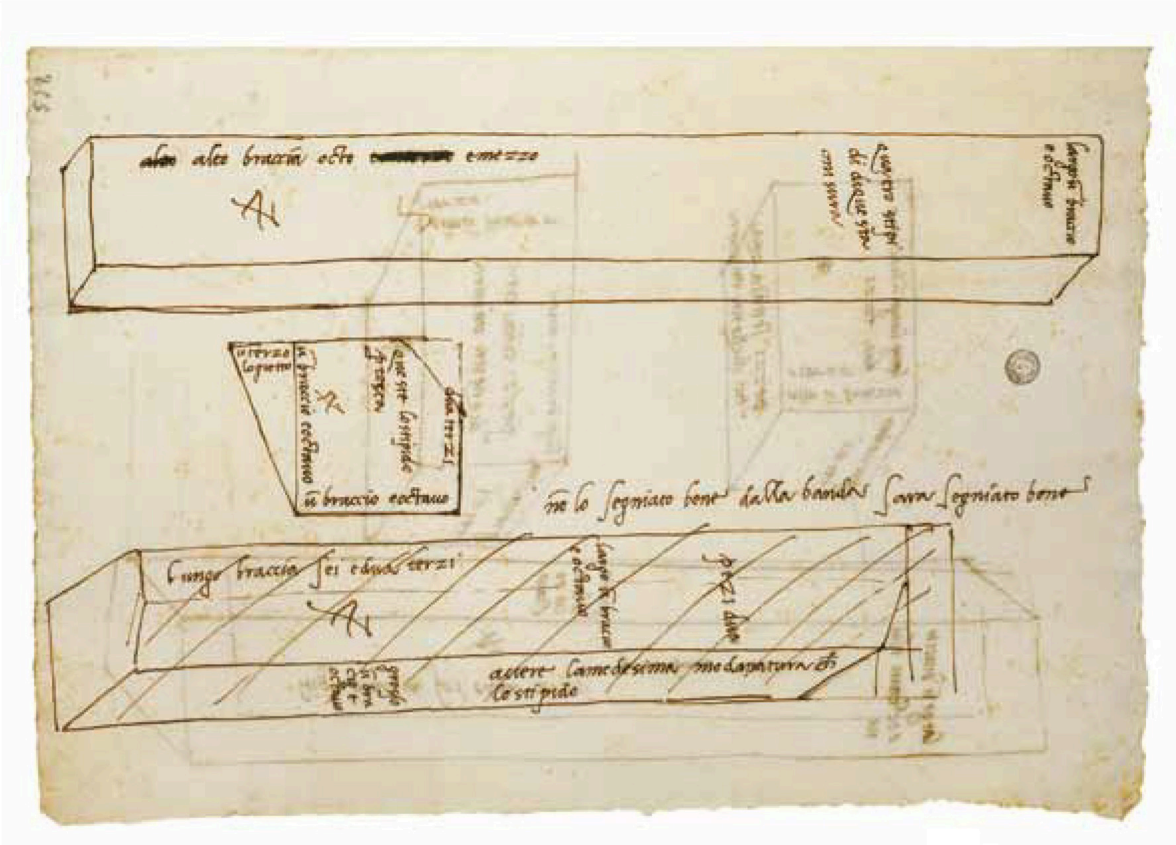
6-43. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 450r. Archivio Buonarroti I 144–45, fol. 260–61. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

What the pictorial element does provide is something completely incommensurate with the semantic logic of pictures and captions. Many of these pages can only be described as beautiful, which is to say that they partake of a compositional aesthetic that is completely independent of their possible utilities. The elegance of line, the formal perfections of calligraphy, the way in which the geometric shapes are made to fill the page: none of these properties refers to anything beyond the drawing itself. They do not, in other words, replicate the quarry that they came from, still less the architectural design where they are going. (In fact, when Michelangelo arranges the blocks in something approximating their final form [e.g., Figure 6-43], the drawing is notably casual and unaesthetic.) The presence of this aesthetic surplus is by no means limited to the marble diagrams. It is clear that during a late period in the artist's career, he begins to produce architectural representations whose form and medium go far beyond the practical requirements that we associate with such sketching (e.g., Figure 6-44), even when other materials on the sheets make it clear that they were not destined to be presentation drawings.[62] The heavy presence of chalk and the addition of wash and whitening on groundplans and window sketches, as well as the remarkable geometries of the triangular reading room designs or of the almost science-fiction shapes that he bestows on the Florentine fortifications amount to a superfluity vastly beyond the requirements of plain communication.

Drawings of marble blocks served the prosaic purpose of carrying a transparent message from Florence to Carrara, while renderings intended for patrons had the rhetorical aim of securing the job or winning permission to do the job as Michelangelo wished. In theory, word and picture could play equally well with both audiences, the verbal effects providing explanation and systems of persuasion while the visual effects supplied diagrammatic clarity and aesthetic salesmanship. But much of the time the resulting pages are characterized by a surplus as regards the standard equation whereby a building project is designated by a utilitarian representation along with the minimum text sufficient to performing its simplifying function. To put it simply, Michelangelo regularly gives these drawings either more visual beauty or more discursive text than is required by the fundamental transaction in which they are presumed to engage. That excess is, to a considerable extent, the portion of his effort that (as we have seen so often in these pages) is intended for his eyes alone. It proves, in other words, very difficult to separate public and private in Michelangelo's sketchbook, even when the most practical and most teleological purposes are being served.

6-44. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 619r. Casa Buonarroti 106A. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

Of course, if these sheets of paper are characterized by surplus and supplement, if the page Michelangelo sent to Leonardo Sellaio (see Figures 6-30, 6-31), with its balance of image, diagram, and explanatory texts, is the exception rather than the rule, we should not be surprised, given that none of these building projects ever went according to plan. The real story of Michelangelo's artistic production that is to be read on these pages, then, may tell more of uncertainty and error than of well-conceived projects and accurately received messages. We might take as a paradigm one of the marble diagrams (Figure 6-45), apparently intended to illustrate the blocks that would furnish door jambs for the central portal of the San Lorenzo façade, which includes, first, a slab that is 8½ *braccia* in height, followed by a cross-section of it, and then a different piece that is to be the same width but only 6⅓ *braccia* high. Something went wrong with this last sketch, however, perhaps having to do with the way that Michelangelo indicated its three-dimensionality (in fact, he reveals what we would consider a very unsure hand with perspective on many of these drawings), and he cancelled it with a series of diagonal slashes.[63] He then turned the sheet ninety degrees clockwise and wrote, "*non lò segniato bene dalla banda sarà segniato bene*" ("I did not draw this well; on the back it will be well drawn"). On the verso, the slab is drawn with a simpler indication of its dimensionality and with a representation of the horizontal blocks that will be attached to it. It is a trivial transaction, except for the fact that this admission of error is so elegantly penned, even with flourishes on the final *e*'s of *bene*. Even that might not be worth remarking upon were it not for the fact that Michelangelo has a habit of self-criticism and self-cancellation.



6-45. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 449r. Casa Buonarroti I 139, fol. 255. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

And he has, moreover, a habit of sharing this self-criticism with others. It is striking that Michelangelo exposes his own errancy on projects designed for a particularly formal public reception. We will consider in Chapter Seven some of his most personal and inward work in verse, but more pertinent to our present subject is a series of poetic efforts that he circulated during the 1540s. The artist's literary friend and patron, Luigi del Riccio, had a young nephew who had been celebrated during his brief lifetime in typical homoerotic fashion as one of those Platonic paragons dear to Renaissance humanists. When the boy Cecchino died, del Riccio attempted to have Michelangelo produce a memorial portrait; what emerged from the correspondence instead was a series of fifty poetic epitaphs, composed over a period of a year and sent, piece by piece, to the grieving uncle. These were complicated transactions on all sides, given the triangulation of desire (del Riccio himself had written quasi-amorous lyrics apropos Cecchino), Michelangelo's refusal to produce a sculpture along with his decision to write in its place verses that sound like the voice of sculpture, and the circuit of gift-giving, with all its complex decorum.[64]

All these channels of *politesse* enabled (or encouraged) Michelangelo to attach a whole anthology of modesty formulas to his communiqués. He refers to the poems repeatedly as *polizini* (scribbles) or *cose goffe* (clumsy things), he disparages his knowledge of Latin when he has used the phrase *sine peccata* in one of the poems, and more than once he suggests that he is just sending the verses so as to reach the contractual number.[65] But his most imaginative pieces of self-effacement derive from the fact that del Riccio has been sending him gifts of food in return for the verses. From this circumstance, Michelangelo develops a long-running sequence of gastronomic conceits, which are intrinsically deflationary: "I'm sending you these clumsy things . . . only because of the fennel"; "these words are spoken by the trout, not by me, and if you don't like these verses, don't marinate any more of them without pepper"; "since poetry has been becalmed tonight, I am sending you four *berlingozzi* in return for the miser's three *berriquocoli*" (a Florentine in-joke depending on the difference between the literal rich pastries he has received and the metaphorical dry biscuits that he is sending in return).[66] What is perhaps most significant is that Michelangelo—wherever we might locate his true feelings on a continuum between genuine self-criticism and fishing for compliments—inscribes these critiques directly on the sheets of paper where he writes the poems.

One of these self-assessments is rather different from the others, and it will take us back to the production of visual work. On a second draft of the only sonnet among the fifty Cecchino poems, Michelangelo writes, "Messer Luigi, the last four lines of the above octet of the sonnet that I sent you yesterday are contradictory, so I am asking that you return it to me, or that you insert these in their place, to make it less clumsy, or that you revise it for me."[67] (It should be noted that he makes only the tiniest change in his revised version.) Perhaps because he recognized the especially rigorous demands of the sonnet form, Michelangelo here lays aside facetious self-effacements and food gags and instead proposes actual improvements. After all, revision, as can be seen on dozens or even hundreds of his sketching pages, is Michelangelo's real mode of self-criticism; it's no surprise that we will find it asserted explicitly in the midst of a pictorial project that is being launched into circulation, just as the epitaphs were.

No portrait was ever produced for del Riccio, but by the time those epistolary exchanges are under way a different circuit of communication has been established, in which the tokens of exchange are both verbal and visual. Michelangelo met the young Roman patrician

Tommaso Cavalieri early in 1533.[68] It was a period when the artist was still dividing his time between Rome and Florence, and this geographical circumstance had the effect (as in the case of architectural projects) of provoking correspondence. The letters in both directions are passionate, full of extravagant expressions of affection as well as anxiety about possible offenses given or taken. But they are also cautious, with Michelangelo composing multiple drafts and Cavalieri navigating carefully in the complicated territory of the inequalities between them, paradoxically construed by the artist (via elaborate conceits) as reflecting the young man's superiority, rather than the reverse. From the start, Michelangelo's letters come with enclosures: a sonnet, which we cannot identify, and a series of drawings, including *Ganymede*, *Tityus*, and *Phaëthon*, all of which are referred to specifically in the letters, as well as a *Bacchanale of Children* and a portrait of Cavalieri, both mentioned by Vasari, though only the former survives.[69]

However we may try to decode this correspondence—and such an enterprise is at once tempting and perplexing in the extreme—we must take it as a given that we are in a realm of deliberate indirection. These are formal documents in elegant handwriting, and even if their purposes were quite routine, they would be couched in formulas that the twenty-first century might find impenetrable. Add to that issues of social position, and even that must be read on the bias, since one of these men is of higher class but the other of higher standing. And only then do we get to the most problematic parts: how to read expressions of love between men and, beyond that, how to understand the habits of hermeneutic play that were canonized in the very Platonic traditions that Renaissance relationships of this kind looked back upon nostalgically.[70] Suffice it to say that we are bound to be disappointed if we attempt to identify authentic truth behind these systems of expression; on the other hand, much may be learned if we concentrate our attention on the phenomena of those systems themselves.

To sort these out, we must return to some of the central issues we considered in connection with the architectural drawings: words and pictures, public and private. We may take our cue from a particularly intriguing postscript that Michelangelo appended to the letter accompanying the *Ganymede* and the *Tityus* drawings (Figures 6-46, 6-47):

> Sarebbe lecito dare il nome delle cose che l'uomo dona, a chi le riceve: ma per buon rispetto non si fa in questa.
>
> It would be permissible to name to the one receiving them the things that a man gives, but out of nicety it will not be done here.[71]

The body of the letter, it should be noted, is full of flowery conceits praising the recipient, but it makes no mention that drawings have been included in the package; on the contrary, it speaks in a highly hypothetical vein of some possible future gift of art work. The *Ganymede* and the *Tityus* are thus banished into deep silence *per buon rispetto*. Words, according to this model, have at once the somewhat contradictory qualities of being dangerously roundabout and dangerously explicit. Pictures, on the other hand, communicate directly and, so long as they are untainted by language—i.e., by being named—they remain safe from the constructions or miscontructions of ordinary folk unworthy to be in the presence of these secrets. (This is an interesting swerve from Plato's Socrates, who, especially in the *Phaedrus*, enshrined the act of private, one-on-one communication but construed the work of the painter as that which could all too easily fall into the wrong hands.[72]) Cavalieri will respond in kind, reporting with some alarm that the pope and Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici have insisted on seeing the drawings and are threatening to have the *Tityus* and the *Ganymede* reproduced in

crystal. He ends the anecdote by saying that he did all he could to "save the Ganymede" ("Assai ò fatto a salvare il Ganimede").[73] From what, exactly?

6-46. Michelangelo (after), *Ganymede*. Harvard Art Museum, Fogg Art Museum, Gifts for Special Uses Fund, 1955.75

The answer, though (in suitable Platonic fashion) it will not be a very direct one, emerges from a set of words that, in stark contrast to Michelangelo's evasive postscript, are joined indelibly to the images that they reference. Ovid's Phaëthon, who presumed to drive the Sun's chariot through heaven and came crashing down to earth, was a natural subject, given Michelangelo's habitual metaphorics centering on ecstatic flights to heaven and catastrophic

falls from grace as a result of his own unworthiness for upward ascent. Not to mention the fact that *cavaliere* means horseman and that Plato's parable of the charioteer could be applied to anyone struggling to manage the ruly and unruly parts of his soul.[74]

6-47. Michelangelo, *Tityus*, *Corpus* 345. Windsor. The Royal Collection, London

We possess three treatments of this subject (Figures 6-48, 6-49, 6-50),[75] each of them in the form of a three-layer pyramid, with Jupiter at the top, the boy and his horse-drawn chariot tumbling headlong in the middle, and his family mourning him on earth at the bottom. One version is completely finished, while the other two are in varying states of incompletion; both of the latter contain messages to Cavalieri written with the same black chalk as the drawings and in close proximity to them.

In the case of the British Museum drawing, the message reads:

> Tomao, se questo sc[h]izzo non vi piace, ditelo a urbino, acciò che io abbi tempo daverne facto un altro doman dassera [co]me vi promessi; e se vi piace e vogliate che io lo finisca rimandatemelo.
>
> Tommy, if you don't like this sketch, tell Urbino, so that I will have time to get another one done by tomorrow night, as I promised you; and if you like it and want me to finish it, send it back to me.

Even with a volume's worth of Michelangelo's words on drawings, nothing quite prepares us for this. On his way to producing a highly finished piece of work intended for presentation to an individual whom he considers a god among men, the artist interrupts his labor, and the space of his drawing, not with a piece of poetry or a note to himself, but with a wholly prosaic memo to the intended recipient. No amount of historical relativism—none of the conventional mantras about the less privileged status of drawings or about the cost of paper or about studio practice back in this period—should blunt our awareness that this is a strange thing to do. Clearly, it speaks in part to the artist's penchant for self-criticism, self-cancellation,

pentimenti, and so forth: he is worried that Cavalieri won't like this drawing and wants to have the chance to produce another version that the young man will approve. But what if Cavalieri *does* like it, and sends it back so that it can be finished? The *schizzo* will remain inscribed with Michelangelo's self-doubts.

6-48. Michelangelo, *Fall of Phaëthon*, *Corpus* 340r. BM 1895-9-15-517. British Museum, London

6-49. Michelangelo, *Fall of Phaëthon*, *Corpus* 342r. Venice Accademia 177

6-50. Michelangelo, *Fall of Phaëthon*, *Corpus* 343r. Windsor 12766. The Royal Collection, London

The matter only gets more perplexing on the Venice version, where everything is less readable, including the message to Cavalieri, which has now migrated from the bottom of the composition to the middle; as best we can make it out, it reads "l o ritracto el meglio ch[e] o saputo . . . vi rimando il vostro . . . un altra volta" ("I have drawn it the best I know how . . . I am returning yours to you . . . another time"). What does he mean by "yours"? It has frequently been suggested—sometimes with quite extravagant theory-spinning—that Cavalieri had been producing his own Phaëthon, or even that this drawing *is* his Phaëthon, which Michelangelo is now proposing to return.[76] But I think the real meaning of this expression is to be found in the same letter where Cavalieri struggled to "rescue" the *Ganymede* and the *Tityus*. "Forse tre giorni fa io ebbi il mio Fetonte . . . ," he writes ("About three days ago, I got my Phaëthon . . ."): the context, in which the pope and the cardinal clamor to see the work, makes it clear that this is Michelangelo's drawing newly arrived in Rome, and not the young man's own apprentice effort on the same theme. In that reference to *my* Phaëthon, I think we can see everything that these gifts meant to both individuals. Granted that there was, finally, a completely finished version of the drawing, which possessed no mark of text. But it is equally true that these partly finished versions possessed the power of currency as they went back and forth—and indeed, it appears that at least two of three were in the young man's possession.

Cavalieri's first person possessive pronoun is a mark of the intimacy that these drawings represent. Looked at from Michelangelo's side, the reason the messages do not terminally disfigure the work of art that he is creating for his adored friend is that they are the tokens of a passionate act of collaboration, part love and part art. Throughout this chapter, we have seen Michelangelo reach out for community in the making of his art objects—when he urges Mini not to waste time, when he can't bear to draw because Perino is absent, and even, in a more mundane sense, when he decorates his architectural sketches so that his assistants or his patrons can share his vision. All of these transactions reveal both Michelangelo's solitude and his efforts at communion, variously expressed between picture and word. On these Phaëthon drawings, though the traces are desperately effaced in their own way, these hopes are fulfilled. The communication that Socrates had advocated in the *Phaedrus* was not the finished product—in his case, a *verbal* product—but an ephemeral act in which he would write on the soul of his beloved. The inscriptions on the Phaëthon pages stand as a token of that dream: Michelangelo wants to be drawing on the soul of Cavalieri.

7
VAT. LAT. 3211

So far, at least, Michelangelo's poetry has found itself rather on the margins of this book. We have traced some of its origins to remembered bits of Dante and Petrarch, fragments of prayers, and passionately voiced outcries relating to personal circumstances that we cannot always reconstruct. We have seen it in the company of all sorts of life sketches, sometimes in overlapping spaces and sometimes carefully quarantined; we have noted its incongruous appearance on sheets principally devoted to exquisitely fine drawings of the Madonna or on hastily scribbled architectural to-do lists. But in almost all of these cases we have followed several centuries of practice as regards Michelangelo: we have seen him above all as a visual artist, with a sideline of versifying.

There is good reason for this system of priorities. Michelangelo-the-poet has never been, and never will be, recognized in the same way as Michelangelo-the-artist. He would have to be another Dante to attain that level of recognition; and, though the two have enjoyed several centuries of interconnection, mostly via the *Last Judgment*, those associations have generally segregated them in their own official spheres of creativity. Indeed, we have only modest contemporary encouragement for placing Michelangelo among the poets at all. Condivi is somewhat formulaic on the subject; Vasari pays attention to the matter largely in regard to his own correspondence with the Master, and even when contemporaries produced encomia to the multiplicity of Michelangelo's talents, they tended to enumerate only sculpture, painting, and architecture. Not to mention the fact that there was nothing like a published edition of the *Rime* until almost sixty years after his death.[1]

On the other hand, as we have seen, when Benedetto Varchi was brought out of exile by Cosimo de' Medici in 1543 and installed at the newly minted Florentine Academy with the assignment to deliver regular lectures on Dante and Petrarch, he soon published the first of his *Due Lezzioni*, based on a remarkably energetic close reading of Michelangelo's sonnet "Non ha l'ottimo artista alcun concetto." Clearly, such specifically literary attention could not have arisen out of nothing or merely out of its author's non-writerly reputation.[2] The present chapter will consider a manuscript that gives further evidence of a serious humanistic kind of reception for the poetry, beginning in the period of the *Due Lezzioni* and continuing after Michelangelo's death; it is also our occasion to consider a set of sheets where, for once, writing is at the center and drawing is relegated to the margins.

The context is that same circle of fellow Florentines in exile whom we have already touched upon in other connections. During the first half of the 1540s, Michelangelo enjoyed the close and interlocking friendships of Donato Giannotti and Luigi del Riccio. Both were anti-Medicean exiles, and Del Riccio in particular, as head of the Strozzi banking interests in Rome, provided essential support for the artist. But what most especially united the three friends was a set of humanist and literary interests.[3] In addition to the dialogue concerning Dante's *Commedia* and the exchange of epitaphs for Cecchino Bracci, it became the project of these friends to produce in fair copy a collection of Michelangelo's completed poems, whether for

publication in book form (as scholarship since Frey has generally assumed, though without any hard evidence) or simply as a set of authenticated texts that could circulate among worthy admirers.[4] The codex as we have it, known to us by its Vatican catalogue number, is comprised of the copies produced by del Riccio and Giannotti or their scribes, followed by some eighty sheets of text in Michelangelo's own handwriting, generally on both sides of the page. The vast majority of this material consists of poetic drafts, with some few pages devoted to letters and, at the end, a lengthy recipe for eye medication.

To begin with what we can say for certain, these sheets represent a notable proportion of all the poetry we have in Michelangelo's own hand,[5] and they signal his very active engagement in verse-writing during the five years or so before del Riccio's death in 1546 and continuing through the subsequent decades. Further, seventeen of these sheets also contain drawings, almost all of which are universally agreed to be in Michelangelo's hand.

It is tempting, perhaps dangerously so, to venture into speculative work on Vat. lat. 3211 as a document in itself. Certainly, although Michelangelo's handwriting appears on the large majority of these pages, he did not himself assemble the codex, and therefore we cannot ascribe to him any sort of design regarding its nature or purposes. Still, considering that the first twenty-two sheets represent an attempt at collecting Michelangelo's poems undertaken by two of his closest friends, and that the compilation as a whole is the work of the individual, Fulvio Orsini, into whose hands the artist's papers were entrusted after his death, we must understand all the purposes behind the work, whether from the 1540s or from the period between 1564 and the compiler's death in 1600, as belonging to persons who knew him well and had every reason to honor what they took to be his intentions.[6]

If one is enticed into detective work here, it is not only because of the pedigree of the manuscript but also due to the fact that it bears so many signs—admittedly enigmatic—of being organized with some sorts of logic. The non-autograph poems collected by del Riccio and Giannotti are all placed at the front of the book, and they are consecutively numbered 1 through 40, at which point there is a handwriting change and the numbering stops, only to begin again with another handwriting change at number 72. The pages of the entire manuscript are numbered continuously, with Roman numerals on the recto of each sheet, presumably the work of Orsini. Within the autograph section, poems in fair copy, or something close to it, predominate near the beginning, while sheets with revision and correction increase in frequency toward the middle and later sections. Between folios 27 and 41, many of the poems are ticked with a diagonal line to the left of the first verse, and, in the same section, many are given an Arabic number (quite unlike the numbers that appear next to the poems in the non-autograph section), but the numbering is rarely consecutive. All these various signs of cataloguing disappear after folio 51, at just about the point where the revised pages become more frequent. The sheets with drawings on them are, for the most part, grouped toward the end of the book, again coinciding with the pages containing rougher drafts. The non-poetic autograph material is almost entirely relegated to the final pages.

The securest conclusions to be drawn from all this are perhaps the most cautious. Vat. lat. 3211 stands as the result of more than one contemporary attempt to codify Michelangelo's work as a writer. It begins as a project for publication in a quite conventional sixteenth-century sense: that is, produced by scribes in a form that could be transmitted directly to a printer, or even copied by further hands if its destiny was manuscript circulation following the more traditional, coterie style of publication. Following this, a more palimpsestic effort is undertaken, according to which the poet's autograph is collected—subsequent to the writing itself and possibly to the author's death—and submitted to some sort of editorial process that chooses particular poems and assigns them an order for eventual public diffusion. But the raw

materials of this archive soon turn the codex into a quite different sort of document. Because the trove of papers includes sheets so heavily reworked that they could not possibly be useful in the printing house and because their author is a figure whose importance puts a high value on everything he touched, the collection metamorphoses into a kind of personal relic, including not only texts designated as poetic but also anything the compiler could lay his hands on.

Whatever the principles of ordering may have been, this is a document from Michelangelo's later years, encompassing a period when his accomplishments as an artist are largely behind him. Only the Pauline Chapel and the *Brutus* can be numbered among finished works during this time, while the majority of the artistic projects that continue to occupy him, including St. Peter's, the Capitoline, S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini, the last stages of the Julius Tomb, and the Florentine *Pietà*, tend to bring more grief than triumph.[7] It is arguable, of course, that *every* phase of Michelangelo's artistic career was shadowed by his own frustration, but these years are especially dark, particularly since—as the poems themselves attest—he possessed an exceptionally acute sense of approaching death and (needless to say) could not have divined the uncommonly long span of years that would be allotted to him.

By way of contrast, these same years, and especially the 1540s and early 1550s, represent a highpoint of Michelangelo's career as a poet, both in terms of quantity and quality. It is tempting, in fact, to hypothesize that the grandly acted out distresses of his work life and psyche, while they put obstacles in the path of his accomplishments as a visual artist, became rich material for the poet. And if that formulation is either too simplistic or too ingenious, we can at least look back on the whole of Michelangelo's romance with picture and word as characterized by a tendency to embrace language as a medium in which the inexpressible challenges of visual production could be vented, as has been evident on the many pages where he wrote words in the midst of his drawings.

But the Vatican codex does not generally consist of sheets on which Michelangelo alternated sketching and scribing. They are primarily documents in the creative life of a poet, and they are of remarkable interest even if one quite ignores the presence of drawings (as many commentators do). In effect, this body of paper, along with some parallel materials that remained in Florence or found their way back there and were preserved in Casa Buonarroti codices, is the epicenter for looking at Michelangelo *vice versa*: that is, as a poet who also happened to be a visual artist. Not that his other, more famous profession can be left out of the calculation: hence, our questions here not just about the sheets where both writing and drawing take place but also about the larger relationship that emerges from their common presence.

First of all, we must interrogate the very fact that these sheets are preserved. If the matter has already arisen in regard to drawings, where preservation (or non-preservation) is an index of the importance a given sheet possessed and of its status as a medium of communication, it is equally appropriate to raise questions regarding poetic drafts. As inheritors of nineteenth-century philology, we long for the archival retention of every imaginable sheet touched by the hand of any author of anything. The early moderns, it is clear, possessed no such mentality. Wherever they stood in the relation between manuscript culture and print culture, they tended to be teleologists as regards the written word: once a text existed in fair copy or on the printed page, the author's workbook was, basically, superseded.[8] One can certainly find an analogous attitude as regards visual artists: it is no surprise that Michelangelo's contemporaries paid more attention to the Sistine Ceiling than to the drawings for the Sistine Ceiling. Still, it lies at the very heart of *pictura* that only the hand of the artist can produce a genuine work, whereas, in the case of *poesis*, mechanical reproduction (which, after all, did

not begin with Benjamin) occasions no serious loss of authenticity. Which suggests, first, that across all premodern artistic production, we are likelier to possess artists' sketches than poets' first drafts, and—more to the point—that we probably enjoy this rich horde of Michelangelo's verse efforts in part because he was an artist, so that even where there was no visual production on a sheet of paper, it nonetheless possessed unique value because it had been touched by his hand.

Quite apart from questions of preservation, all the remaining pieces of Michelangelo's paper, consecrated to whatever singular or plural artistic medium, reveal him to have been an obsessive maker of drafts. Whether the subject was the soldiers at Cascina or the fortifications of Florence,[9] whether he was writing Neoplatonic love poetry to Tommaso Cavalieri or a sonnet to a *donna crudele*, he covered sheet after sheet of paper with provisional efforts until he got what he wanted, or failed definitively. Even if these activities had not been conducted in what amounts to the same medium and sometimes in the same spaces, it would seem an elementary strategy in historical analysis to place them in parallel. Vat. lat. 3211 gives us that opportunity.

Of course, it is by no means obvious, as with many other comparisons of *pictura* and *poesis*, how verbal and visual sketching are to be compared, how the critic is to sort out their similarities and differences. As for Michelangelo, he was a professional artist, which means that many of his drawings were made with a view toward a particular end product that had been called into being by the requirements of others; he was not, on the other hand, a professional poet, which means that his verse efforts were more likely to involve improvisation. But the contagion between these opposites is as significant as the opposition. The open-ended situation of the poems should remind us how many of his drawings were independent of a predetermined goal, while the targeted quality of the drawings should remind us that his poetic work was, in fact, largely in verse forms (especially the sonnet and the madrigal) that imposed very specific formal requirements, toward which his drafts—whatever unruly passions they may have been expressing—were quite diligently laboring.

And there were indeed many drafts. Of the ninety or so poems that appear in the autograph portion of Vat. lat. 3211, twenty-three are to be found in multiple versions, appearing on as many as seven sheets, and in one case, the sestet of "Per ritornar là donde venne fora" (G106), including what I count as twenty different versions of some or all of the verses.[10] Given the quantities of manuscript material and its variety, Michelangelo's verse oeuvre raises more complex and unresolvable questions about a definitive text than that of perhaps any other early modern writer. And, despite the magisterial work of editors from Frey to Girardi, much remains to be done, particularly if we are seeking a less positivistic conclusion than theirs and do not insist on identifying the one authoritative version for each of the poems that appear in multiple drafts. In the present account, we will not, there, judge the "best" or the "truest" or "final" reading of the many manuscript variants under discussion.[11] Rather we will attempt to do with poetic pages what we have done with drawings: namely, to read the processes of Michelangelo's mind by reading the processes of his work.[12]

All these variations are best viewed within an outline of constants. It is a characteristic of Michelangelo's poetry, especially but not exclusively of his sonnets, that he makes his way through a set of rhetorical propositions with a syllogistic rigor that is (not coincidentally) almost as precise as the verse form itself. And it is this tight framework which sets in high relief the often obsessive quality of the revisions that minutely alter the itinerary from a fixed beginning to a fixed end. Typically, he does not rewrite whole poems; he worries one verse or

group of verses at a time, providing numerous alternative possibilities and illuminating what must be the most difficult, or even unsayable, counterplot underlying his poetic impulse.

We might take the instance of "Ben può talor col mie 'rdente desio" (G259), one of countless texts expressing a yearning to believe that earthly love will present no impediment to an afterlife of heavenly love. This is the form in which we now know it:

> Ben può talor col mie 'rdente desio
> salir la speme e non esser fallace,
> ché s'ogni nostro affetto al ciel dispiace,
> a che fin fatto arebbe il mondo Iddio
> Qual più giusta cagion dell'amart'io
> è, che dar gloria a quella eterna pace
> onde pende il divin che di te piace,
> e c'ogni cor gentil fa casto e pio?
> Fallace speme ha sol l'amor che muore
> con la beltà, c'ogni momento scema,
> ond'è suggetta al variar d'un bel viso.
>
> Dolce è ben quella in un pudico core,
> che per cangiar di scorza o d'ora strema
> non manca, e qui caparra il paradiso.
>
> Hope can indeed at times ascend on high with my burning desire and not prove false, for if all our emotions were displeasing to heaven, to what end would God have made the world?
>
> What juster reason for my loving you can there be, than to give glory to that eternal peace from which derives the divine element in you that brings pleasure, and that makes every noble heart pure and devout?
>
> False hope is harboured only by that love which dies with the beauty that is worn away by each passing minute, and so is subject to the variation wrought in a beautiful face.
>
> Sweet indeed is the hope found in a chaste heart: it does not fail because of changes caused in the husk or brought by the final hour, and is here below a pledge of paradise.[13]

This poem is always cited as an instance of the problematic addressee; what began as a passionate expression of feelings toward Tommaso Cavalieri ended up in its final form directed toward a less specified object, possibly identifiable with Vittoria Colonna. In fact, as Michelangelo works his way through four different sheets of the Vatican codex (and more than four different sets of alternatives), the citation of the addressee is subject to constant alteration. The repeated expression is *o signor mio*, but that ordinary little phrase keeps winding its way through different parts of the poem and getting attached to different propositions. At first, it opens the second quatrain: "S'i' t'amo e reverisco, *o signor mio*" ("if I love you and revere you, o my lord"), or "Chi t'ama onora, *o* dolce *signior mio*" ("Whoever loves you honors you, o sweet my lord"). Then it moves to the beginning of the first tercet: "Amor non è, *signor mie*, quel che muore" ("love is not, my lord, that which dies") or, in another version, "quell'amore" ("love is not . . . *that* love . . ."), death being left out of the

equation, at least temporarily. But then this broad-based definition of what love *isn't* gets detached from *signor mio*, only to reappear at the beginning of the last tercet as a more specific assertion and denial: "Amo di te, *signior*, non quel di fore . . ." ("I love in you, lord, not that outside . . .").

Finally—assuming that we understand the sequence correctly—the invocation of the (male) beloved, having emerged more boldly than before, disappears altogether, along with its gender-identifying phrase. The notion that there is any specific object of this desire at all is downgraded to a single "*t*," in what amounts to a rather awkward expression: "Qual più giusta cagion dell'amar*t*'io . . ." ("that more righteous reason for loving you"). And the author reveals himself as having needed to retreat from the risks of passionate love toward the more hopeful certainties of sublimation. Furthermore, the same process that has shunted and finally erased *signor mio* has doubled *fallace speme* ("false hope"), with the hope that "la speme . . . non esser fallace" ("that hope will not be false") in line 2 and the relegating of "Fallace speme" in line 9 to "l'amor che muore" ("the love that dies"). In short, it isn't only a male beloved or Tommaso Cavalieri who is cancelled but the hopes associated with desire itself.

If the place of the beloved is unstable in the poetic fabric, there are liable to be even more radical uncertainties when the subject is Michelangelo's own feelings. One of the most heavily revised poems of all, "S'alcuna parte in donna è che sie bella" (G256), is based on a problematic having to do with the *parte bella* and the *parte brutta* of the Lady. In its modern published form, it reads as follows:

S'alcuna parte in donna è che sie bella,
benché l'altre sien brutte,
debb'io amarle tutte
pel gran piacer ch'i' prendo sol di quella?
La parte che s'appella,
mentre il gioir n'attrista,
a la ragion, pur vuole
che l'innocente error si scusi e ami.
Amor, che mi favella
della noiosa vista,
com'irato dir suole
che nel suo regno non s'attenda o chiami.
E 'l ciel pur vuol ch'i' brami,
a quel che spiace non sie pietà vana:
ché l'uso agli occhi ogni malfatto sana.

If in a woman there is some part that is beautiful, though the others are ugly, ought I to love them all because of the great pleasure I take in that part alone? The part which diminishes our joy appeals none the less to reason, and makes the plea that the innocent fault be excused and loved. But when Love speaks to me of the distressing sight, it usually says in angry tones that in his kingdom no attention should be paid to reason, no call made to it.

Yet heaven wills that I should burn for her, and that pity should not be lacking towards what displeases: because familiarity to our eyes heals all defects.

The more that one reads the many redactions of lines from this madrigal, the less it is clear what exactly that opposition refers to, since Michelangelo appears to walk a line between two

quite different topoi. On the one hand, there is the Shakespearean "Dark Lady"; i.e., the woman who is desired in spite of (or because of) her lack of physical beauty. This is the reading of most commentators,[14] though it is a theme nowhere else found in the *Rime*. On the other hand, and much more in keeping with his erotic premises elsewhere, there are the ideologies of Neoplatonism, with their various Manichaean oppositions and with the sense that heterosexual eros is itself the *parte brutta* of desire.[15] This indeterminacy seems to run almost too deep even for the revisions to address: persisting through dozens of small and large changes in the text, the poet never quite specifies what constitutes *bella* and *brutta*. Eventually, it is true, he begins to include oblique references to unpleasant eyesight, which might suggest the topos of the physically ugly lady, but even that may refer to the universal experience of erotic attraction, once it is demonized as entering through the eyes.

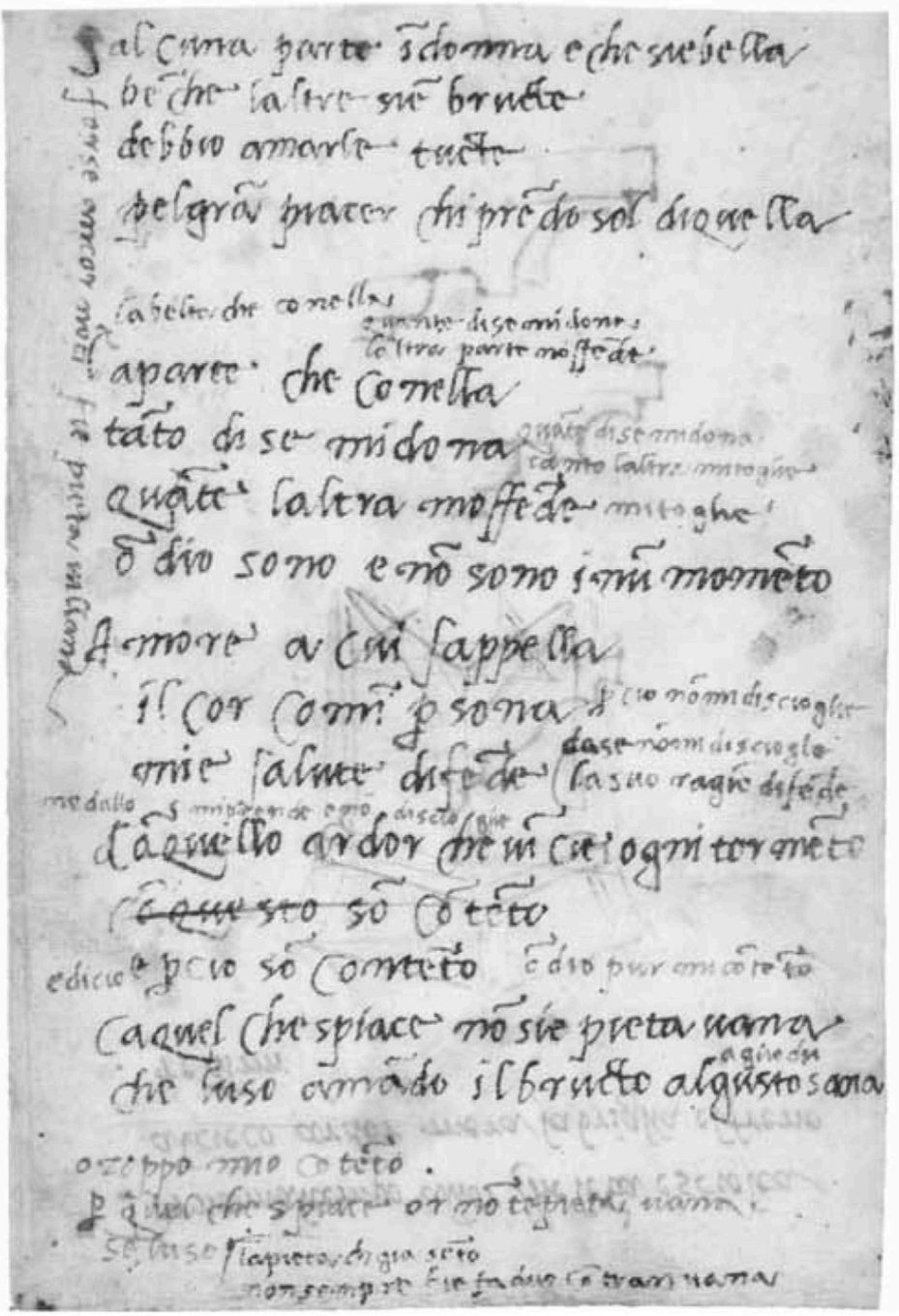
Where Michelangelo does commit himself to compulsive revision is in dramatizing the terms of his own debate. Whether this opposition is between a part that is given and a part that is taken away, or a part that pleases and a part that offends, whether this is nature's fault, or human nature's fault, whether it is in the stars that he be torn by contraries, whether the opposition is between his heart and his eye: he works his way through many possibilities. Most of the time, though, he is not alone at the debating table. His heart summons up a personified Love, who "mie salute difende" ("protects my salvation"), but the phrase is then corrected in the margin to "la suo ragion difende" ("protects his reason"). Later, it is the *parte brutta* itself that makes the appeal to reason, while Amor comments on the problem of ugliness by declaring that reason has no place in his universe.

There is, of course, no disentangling what Michelangelo "really" meant. All of these variants comprise an uncertain set of itineraries that make their separate ways from the starting point of something profoundly contradictory in desire, specifically heterosexual desire; and they all end by postulating that the force capable of producing a positive resolution is *l'uso*. What sort of habit, or practice, or use this is, whether we are talking about something merely mechanical or about something like the Ovidian *ipsoque fit utile usu*,[16] according to which an object becomes in essence what it has been construed as being, remains an open question. Through a long sequence of drafts, *uso* gets associated with the speaker's love: "l'*uso*, *amando*, il bructo al gusto sana" ("use, by loving, heals the ugliness in pleasure") or "l'*uso*, *amando*, ogni difecto sana," ("use, by loving, heals every defect"), or "l'*uso*, *amando*, il bructo agli ochi sana" ("use, by loving, heals the ugliness of the eyes"). Loving, in short, is the use that will solve the problem. But a new definition of the term appears for the first time on the sheet usually understood as providing the final authority, as the poem is printed above. Here we seem to have regressed to a phase in which the problem is simply about visual adaptation: "l'uso agli occhi ogni malfatto sana" ("use heals anything misshapen to the eyes"). In that version, at least, *amando* has disappeared from the equation; the Lady has some ugly aspect, and the speaker just has to get *used* to it.

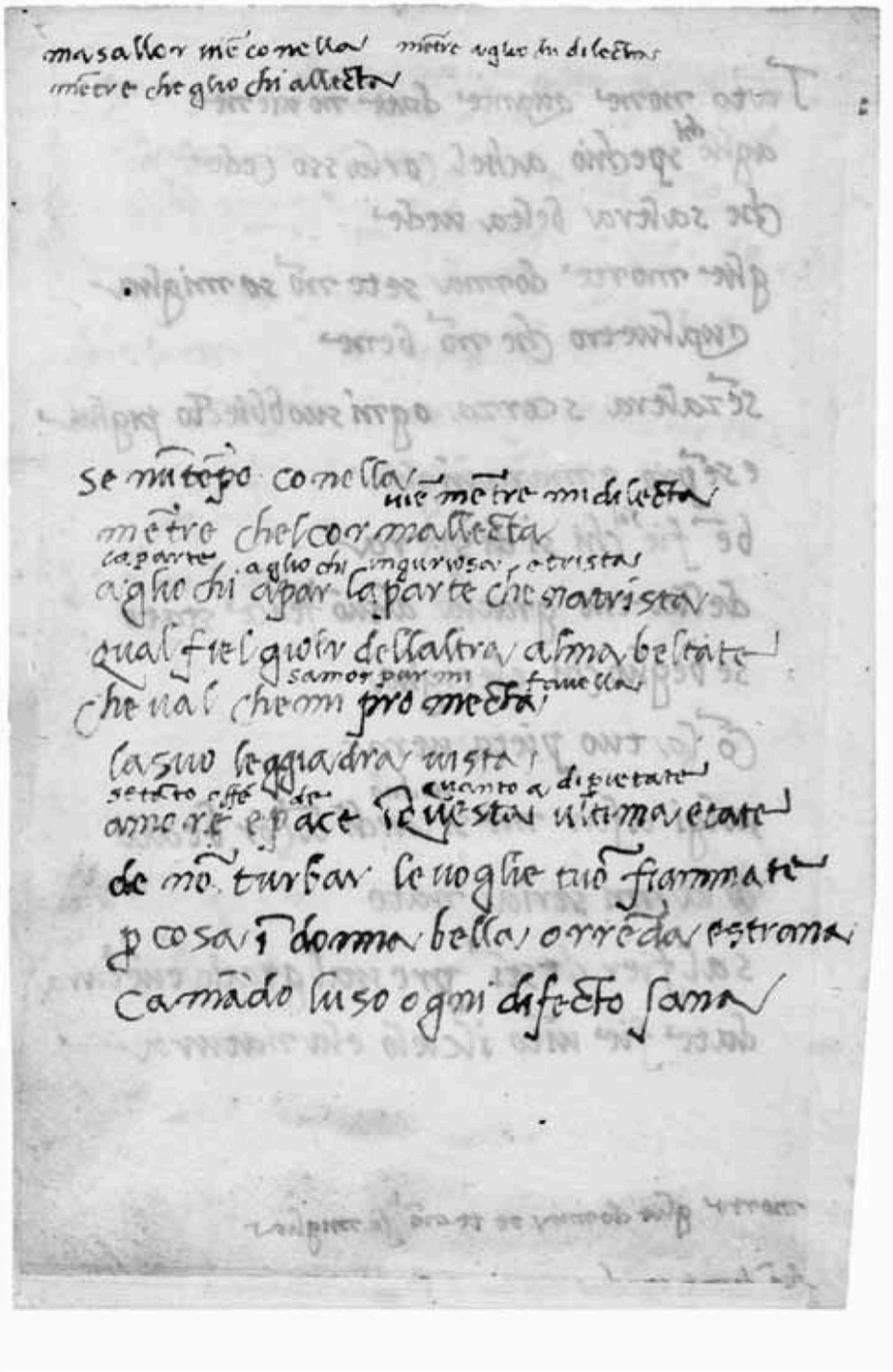
This somewhat trivializing move is all the more definitive because in this draft a new voice is introduced. Amor is characterized here as merely complaining about invoking reason (to a not very clearly specified end). But now heaven is heard from—"E 'l ciel pur vuol ch'i' brami" ("and heaven as well wants me to desire")—decreeing that the speaker should love. And it is heaven, not Amor or the poet's own introspection, that offers the comforting thoughts about his eyes getting used to it. In the same set of moves, then, Michelangelo has produced a *deus ex machina* which shifts the troubling dialogue outside his own head, and he has simplified the problem at the core of his desire.

But it is misleading to talk about this process as though all these drafts were merely collated in a printed book. In fact, this is not just a story about changes inside Michelangelo's

head, it is about changes on his sheets of paper. "S'alcuna parte in donna" appears on five different leaves in the Vatican codex, in two cases on both sides, following a process of composition that is not so much linear as interlinear, thus revealing itself in visual forms analogous to those of his pictorial sketches. His struggles, for instance, with the definition of *parte bella* vs. *parte brutta* appear in heavily entangled spatial relationships within his written texts. On fol. 84v (Figure 7-1), possibly the earliest draft we have, the segment where that distinction begins to operate (essentially, verses 5–8), appears in three separate redactions in small print either between or beside what seems to be the official formal version of the script, while on fol. 55v (Figure 7-2), a revised version of the same section, written small, gets jammed in directly among the lines it is presumably intended to improve upon.



7-1. Michelangelo, Vat. lat. 3211, fol. 84v (*Corpus* 607v). Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City



7-2. Michelangelo, Vat. lat. 3211, fol. 55v. Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City

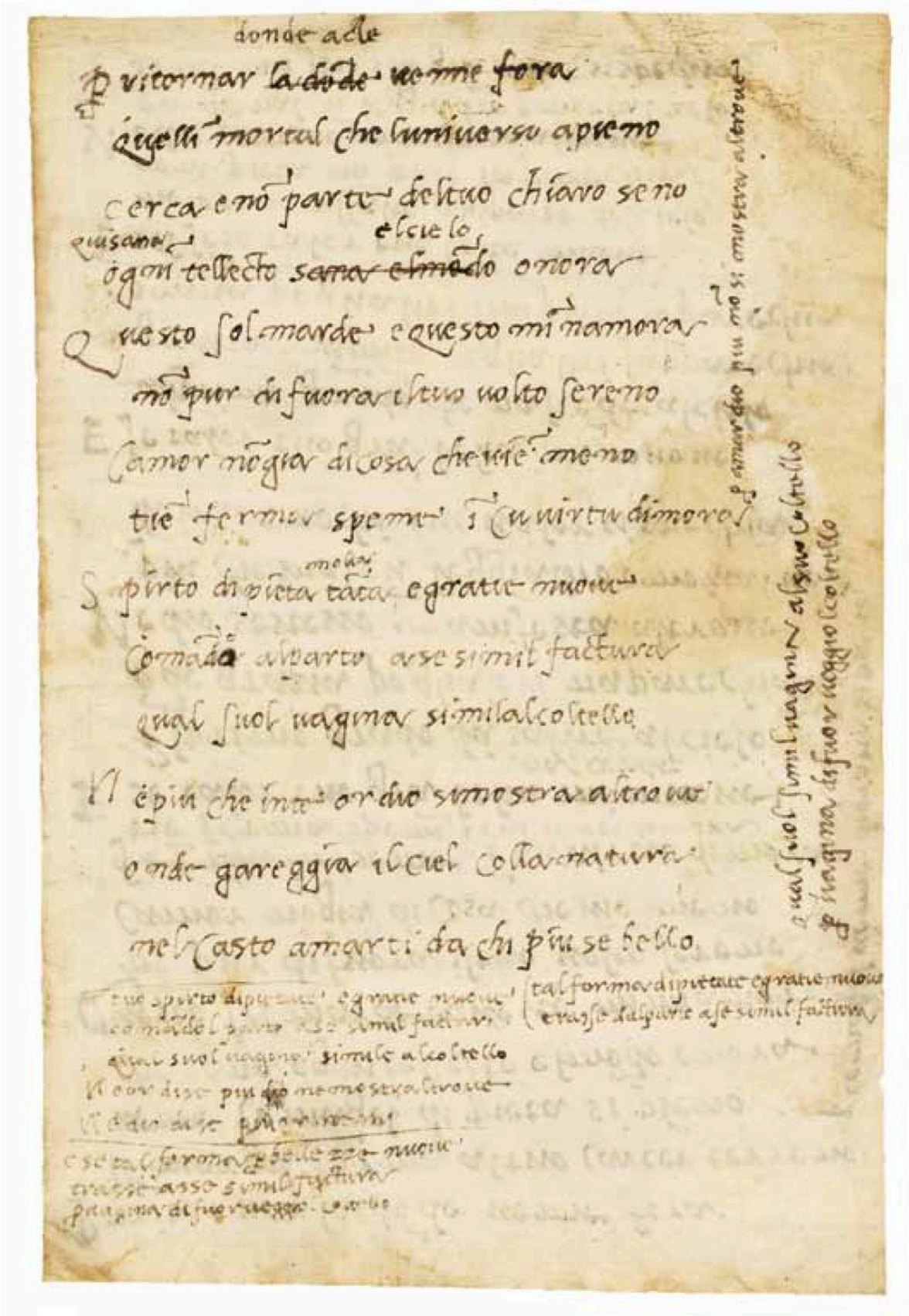
The same sort of visible itinerary can be observed in regard to the madrigal's equally problematic final lines. The notion of *pietà* for the *parte brutta* gets rewritten in the small space that remains at the bottom of fol. 84v after a complete draft has been finished, only to be attempted yet one more time in the even smaller space left by the indentations of the first stanzas once the sheet has been turned ninety degrees. And even in the version that passes for definitive, Michelangelo produces a new, miniaturized rendering of the final line at the bottom of the page, switching from "ché l'uso agli ochi ogni difecto sana" ("that use heal any defect to the eyes") to what appears to be "ché l'uso il bello amando il bructo sana" ("that use

by loving the beautiful heals the ugly"), thus recasting the question of *uso* from being a property of the eyes to a property of love. Even this, however, is unclear from an examination of the manuscript, since Michelangelo has twice corrected the *difecto* of the "clean" version to *malfatto*, but in such a way that it seems to supersede (or actually to join with) his apparently previous *pentimento* that has reintroduced love into the equation. As we will see in many other cases, the visible conditions of Michelangelo's writing are, in effect, pictures of his process. And the poems need to be read as process.

Nowhere is that clearer than in the case of "Per ritornar là donde venne fora" (G106). If this sonnet gets reworked with particular frequency and energy, it is doubtless because Michelangelo is here confronting some of the most challenging dilemmas of his affective life and of the ideology into which he is trying to fit that life. The postulate here is simple enough. For the purposes of its own greater glory, the divine spirit sometimes creates beings especially like itself, and such a being is bound to inspire the most virtuous kind of love in the speaker:

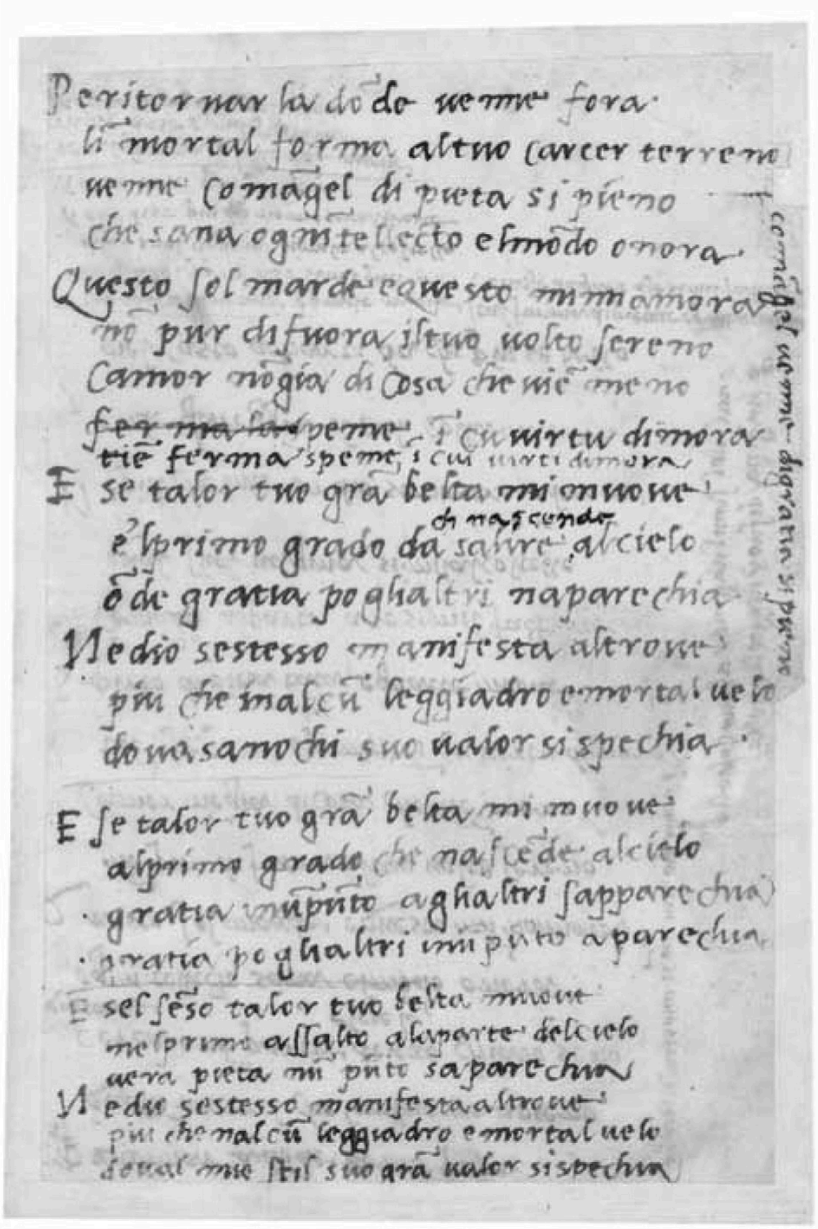
> Per ritornar là donde venne fora,
> l'immortal forma al tuo carcer terreno
> venne com'angel di pietà sì pieno,
> che sana ogn'intelletto e 'l mondo onora.
> Questo sol m'arde e questo m'innamora,
> non pur di fuora il tuo volto sereno:
> c'amor non già di cosa che vien meno
> tien ferma speme, in cui virtù dimora.
>
> In order to return to the place from which it came, the immortal form came to your earthly prison like an angel so full of mercy that it heals every intellect and brings honour to the world.
>
> This alone inflames me and calls forth my love, not something merely external, your bright face: love in which virtue dwells certainly does not place firm hope in what passes away.

Not surprisingly, this opening part of the poem does not receive much rewriting; indeed, the second quatrain sails through all the drafts almost unchanged. In the sestet, however, the struggles on paper begin. Fol. 80v (Figure 7-3) seems to have begun as a potential fair copy, given the gracious spacing between lines and the careful indication of stanzas by enlarged capitals, such that the poem would have occupied the full sheet. But then—probably after the fourteen cleanly scripted lines were completed—Michelangelo begins to attack what he has written. There are minor changes within the octave, but it is the sestet where the labor of multiple revisions takes place. The problem is to define exactly how God is manifested in the beauty of the beloved, and the writing gets ever smaller and more marginal, both cramped at the bottom of the page and turned in the right-side margin, as the poet labors over *spirito* and *forma* and over such a roundabout formulation as "né più che in te or Dio si mostra altrove" ("nor more than in you does God reveal himself elsewhere"). In the very last bit of space, he finally introduces an *if*: "e se tal forma . . . " ("and if such a form . . . ").



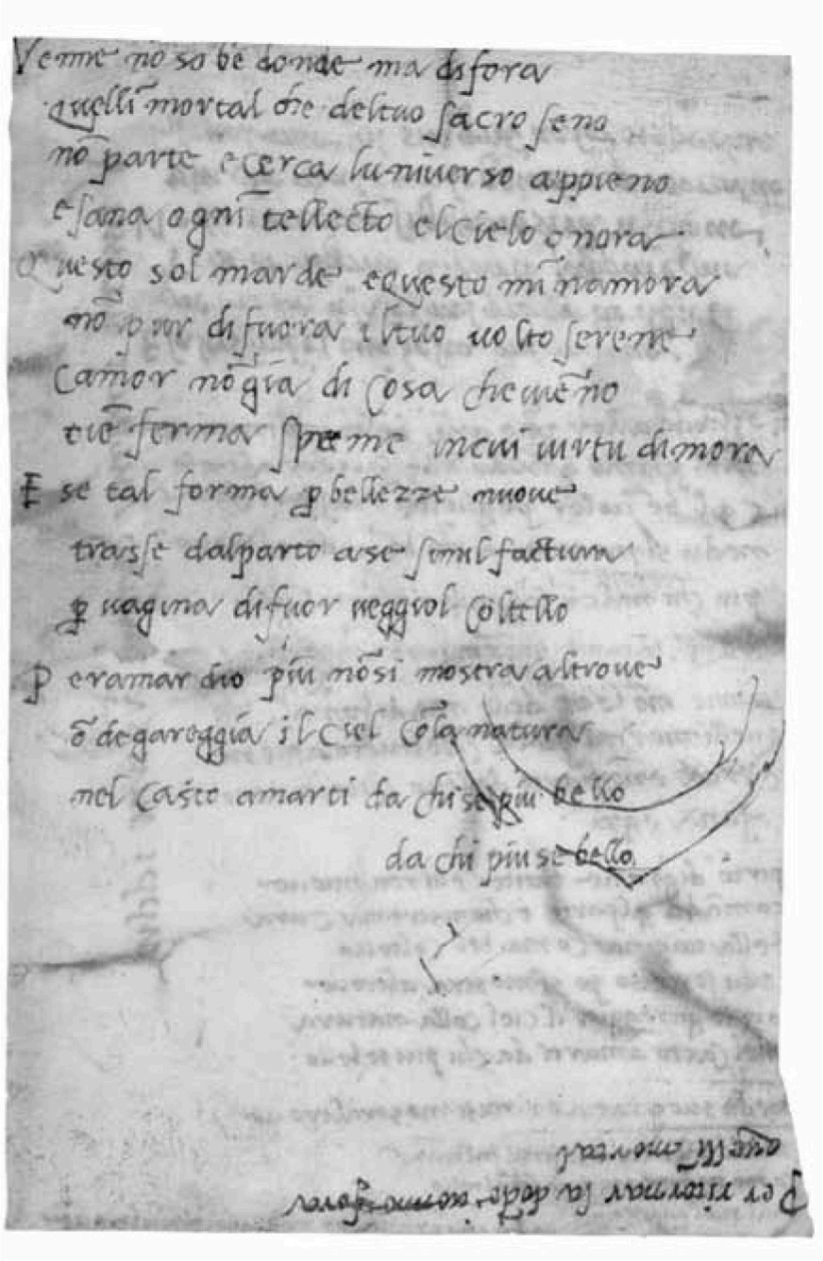
7-3. Michelangelo, Vat. lat. 3211, fol. 80v. Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City

At this point, the conditional proposition has to do with the operations of Platonic divinity, and it soon resolves itself into a quite problematic simile according to which God and the soul resemble each other "qual sol vagina simil al coltello" ("like the sheath usually resembles the sword"). That the likeness between the divine spirit and its human avatar should be represented by the metaphor of the knife and the sheath is in itself a shocking reminder of everything that has to be suppressed in order to sacralize desire. It is perhaps no surprise that it should drop out of the revisions eventually, though it persists through several drafts. But now, on the other side of this sheet and in upside-down relation to it (Figure 7-4), Michelangelo starts the poem over again and, upon reaching the sestet, he composes sequential versions (diminishing in size) of the *if*, except that now, it is not a proposition about divine philosophy but about his own desire. "E se talor tuo gran beltà mi muove . . ." ("and if sometimes your great beauty moves me"): the phrase is repeated almost verbatim, although in the last of these he omits the *mi* and substitutes a different direct object: "E se 'l senso talor tuo beltà muove . . ." ("and if sometimes your beauty moves the senses"), in an apparent attempt to depersonalize the desire. Along with this revision, the subsequent lines change between a climbing *toward* heaven and an assault *from* heaven. In either case, the upshot is that the lover becomes endowed with heavenly grace in the act of loving.



7-4. Michelangelo, Vat. lat. 3211, fol. 80r. Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City

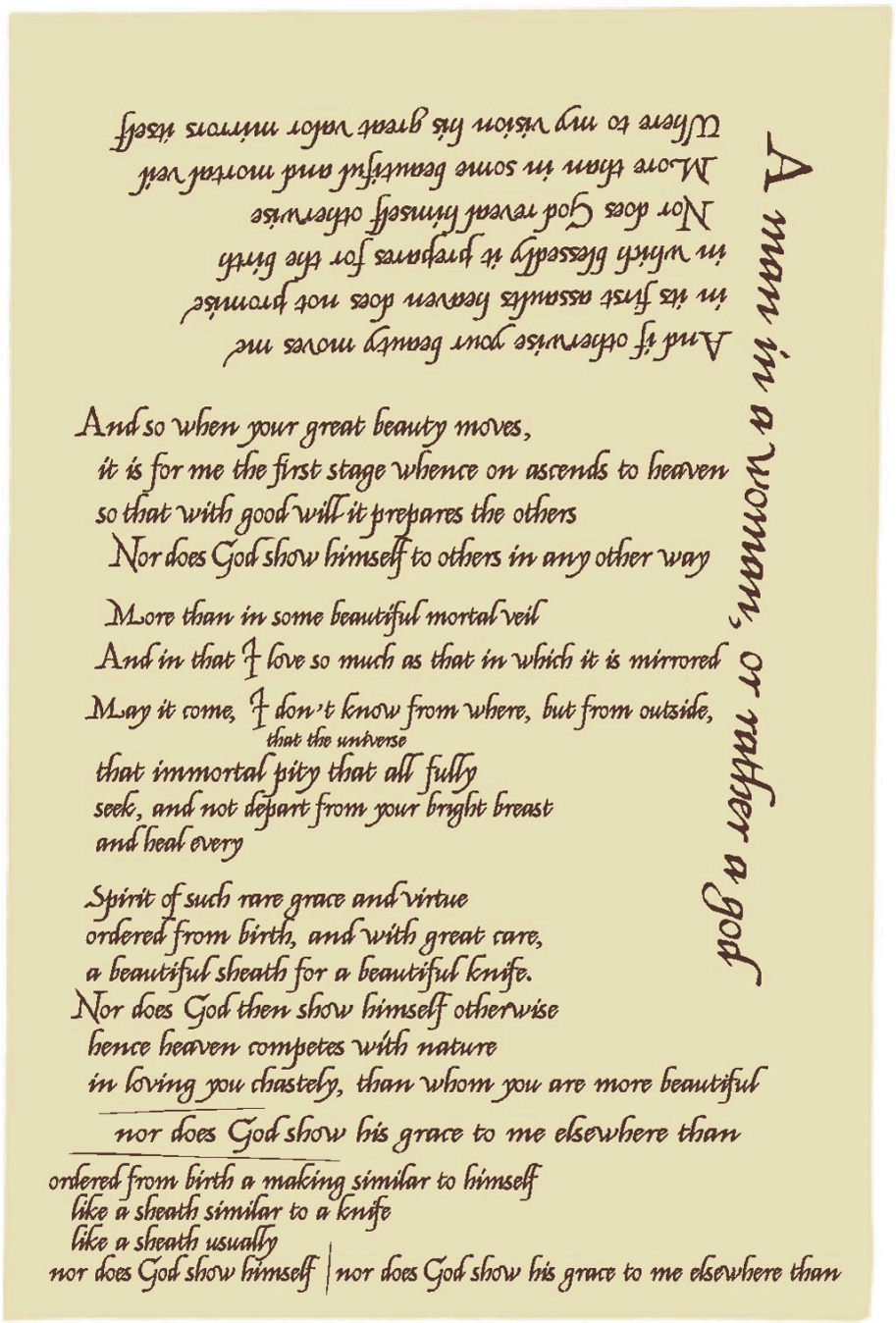
Between this set of repetitions and a phase in which he will largely write his love out of the equation, an even more heavily worked over sheet (fol. 79) intervenes. On one side of it (Figure 7-5), earlier, Michelangelo has sketched a sort of double arc that has been variously identified as having to do with a fortification, or a cupola. In one direction, quite near the arc, so that he could not have finished the poem without intersecting it, he began writing something like a fair copy of "Per ritornar" but stopped halfway through the second line. Turning the sheet 180 degrees, he wrote out a version of the whole sonnet, though with a somewhat different opening line.



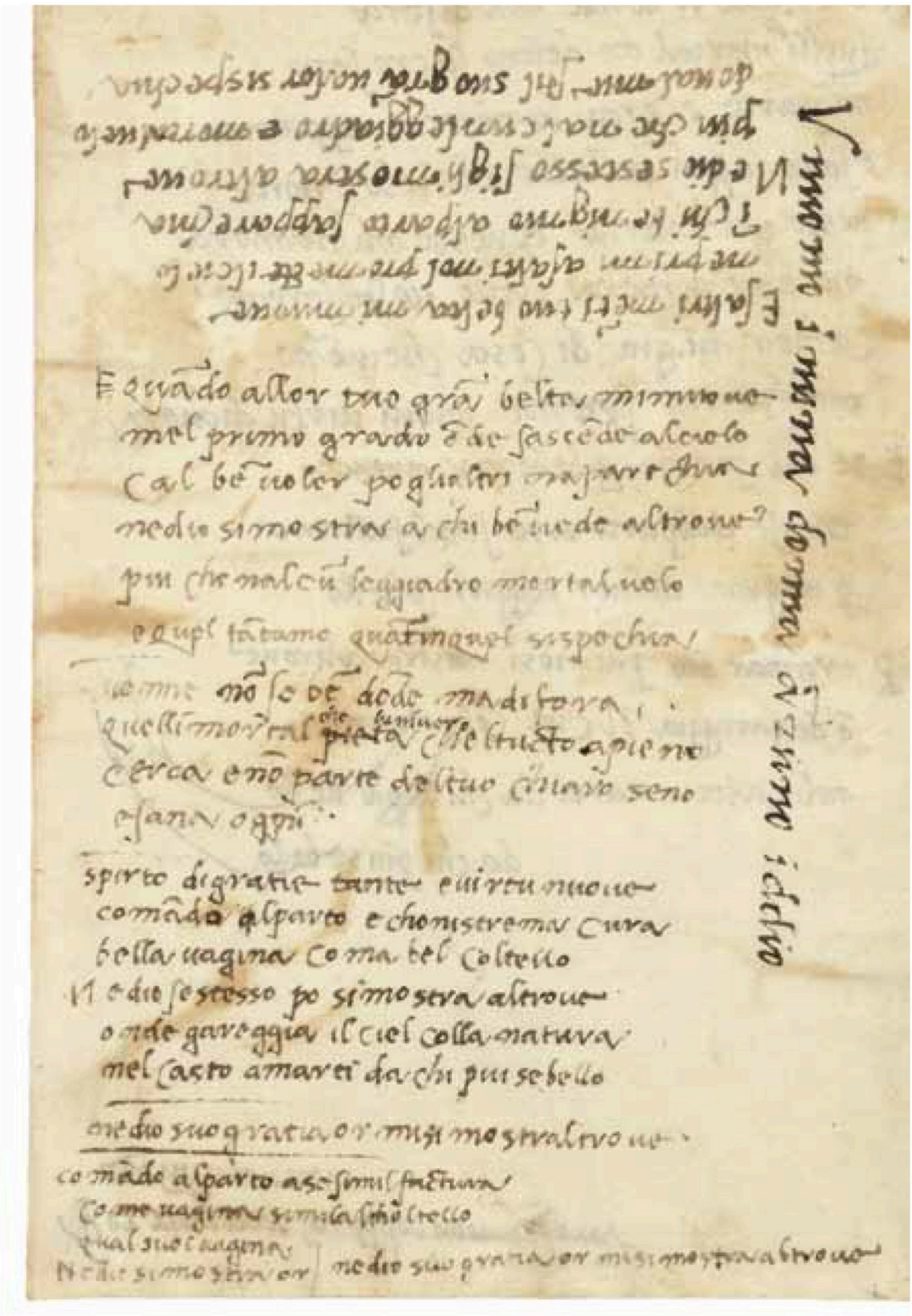
7-5. Michelangelo, Vat. lat. 3211, fol. 79r (*Corpus* 597r). Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City

But it is on the other side of the sheet that he attempts—or previously has attempted—to work out the sestet (see diagram, Figure 7-6, and Figure 7-7). There are six separate attempts at drafting some or all of these verses, generally separated by Michelangelo's characteristic horizontal line. At the bottom, where the space is especially limited, he makes brief efforts, once again, at confronting the question of God's manifestation, with three versions of what is basically "Né Dio suo gratia or mi si mostra altrove . . ." ("nor does God show his grace to me elsewhere than . . ."). In fact, though, it is not quite clear which is the bottom of the sheet, since, in some sort of harmony with the spiritual uncertainties of the quandary in which he finds himself, material directionality begins to waver here. If we look at the sheet in the orientation relative to most of the writing, the middle of the draft is not the sestet at all but a new version of the octave, with a radically heterodox opening that is found nowhere else: "Venne, non so ben donde, ma di fora | quell'immortal pietà" ("may that

immortal pity come, I know not whence, but from outside"), but with *pietà* crossed out and *universo* written in above it.


A man in a woman, or rather a god
And so when your great beauty moves,
it is for me the first stage whence on ascends to heaven
so that with good will it prepares the others
Nor does God show himself to others in any other way
More than in some beautiful mortal veil
And in that I love so much as that in which it is mirrored
May it come, I don't know from where, but from outside,
that the universe
that immortal pity that all fully
seek, and not depart from your bright breast
and heal every
Spirit of such rare grace and virtue
ordered from birth, and with great care,
a beautiful sheath for a beautiful knife.
Nor does God then show himself otherwise
hence heaven competes with nature
in loving you chastely, than whom you are more beautiful
nor does God show his grace to me elsewhere than
ordered from birth a making similar to himself
like a sheath similar to a knife
like a sheath usually
nor does God show himself | nor does God show his grace to me elsewhere than
And if otherwise your beauty moves me
in its first assaults heaven does not promise
in which blessedly it prepares for the birth
Nor does God reveal himself otherwise
More than in some beautiful and mortal veil
Where to my vision his great valor mirrors itself

7-6. Diagram of Figure 7-7



7-7. Michelangelo, Vat. lat. 3211, fol. 79v (*Corpus* 597v). Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City

In a poem whose every version has insisted so strongly on a rigorously spatial map of earth and heaven—one might recollect, too, the *el cielo* and *la terra* written mysteriously on the earlier Medici Tomb sketch[17]—this sudden onslaught of ignorance concerning the fundamental architecture of the divine plan can hardly avoid having implications for the spatiality of the sheet itself. Directly above this draft of the octave, Michelangelo has composed two versions of the sestet. In one of them, beginning "E quando allor tuo gran beltà si muove" ("and when at that moment your great beauty moves [itself]"), he takes a large step toward exiting from the whole process of earthly love, since the change from *mi* to *si* cancels the effect of the beloved's beauty on him and relocates the action of the verb from within himself to somewhere out in the universe. The other version moves decidedly in the opposite direction: "E s'altrimenti tuo beltà mi muove . . . " ("and if, otherwise, your beauty moves me . . . "), with the speaker not only taking full responsibility for his desire but also admitting that it may run contrary to sublime operations of the Platonic circles outlined in the octave.

As it turns out, these versions of the sestet are opposites in more than merely the semantic sense. Though they occupy adjacent space and are parallel to each other and to several other drafts on the sheet, they are written head-to-foot in relation to each other. Even for Michelangelo, this signals a somewhat strange maneuver. Three-quarters of the writing on the page conforms to the same orientation but has begun a quarter of the way down; one quarter of the writing has been produced with a turn of 180 degrees in relation to the rest of it; but either it appeared first on the page oddly near the bottom, or it was produced upside-down in a space that had been unaccountably left free for it. The two versions of the sestet—one in which the beloved's beauty moves like a godhead through space and the other in which the beloved's beauty moves the lover against all the dictates of Platonic desire—have been inscribed *tête-à-cul*.

Finally, and clearly later, the sheet is submitted to one more turning, now in a horizontal orientation. And, in much larger calligraphy within the margin, Michelangelo has written:

Un uomo in una donna, anzi uno iddio.

A man in a woman, or rather a god.

It is the opening line of a different sonnet (G235), but it is also a kind of personal slogan, which was famously applied to Vittoria Colonna.[18] On this page, where Michelangelo seems to have spent some years in the 1530s struggling with the precise terms of his love for Cavalieri, he has, perhaps a decade later, transferred in something like banner headline form a description of his other beloved that gets most powerfully at the heart of all these gender problematics. The folio is not merely a site for drafting poetry but the ground where he sketches out the contradictions of his life.

In fact, there are occasions when Michelangelo seems almost aware that he is looking at his life when he is looking at his own pages of text. "Giunto è già 'l corso della vita mia" (285)[19] is one of the few poems to have been published in Michelangelo's lifetime, having been sent to Vasari and included in the second edition of the *Lives*, doubtless because of the poignancy of its autobiographical retrospection. It also happens to be one of the poems with the largest number of autograph drafts, appearing on six different sheets of the Vatican codex. This is the canonical final version:

Giunto è già 'l corso della vita mia,

con tempestoso mar, per fragil barca,
al comun porto, ov'a render si varca
conto e ragion d'ogni opra trista e pia.
    Onde l'affettüosa fantasia
che l'arte mi fece idol e monarca
conosco or ben com'era d'error carca
e quel c'a mal suo grado ogn'uom desia.
    Gli amorosi pensier, già vani e lieti,
che fien or, s'a duo morte m'avvicino?
D'una so 'l certo, e l'altra mi minaccia.
Né pinger né scolpir fie più che quieti
l'anima, volta a quell'amor divino
c'aperse, a prender noi, 'n croce le braccia.

My life's journey has finally arrived, after a stormy sea, in a fragile boat, at the common port, through which all must pass to render an account and explanation of their every act, evil and devout.

So I now fully recognize how my fond imagination which made art for me an idol and a tyrant was laden with error, as is that which all men desire to their own harm.

What will now become of my former thoughts of love, empty yet happy, if I am now approaching a double death? Of one I am quite certain, and the other threatens me.

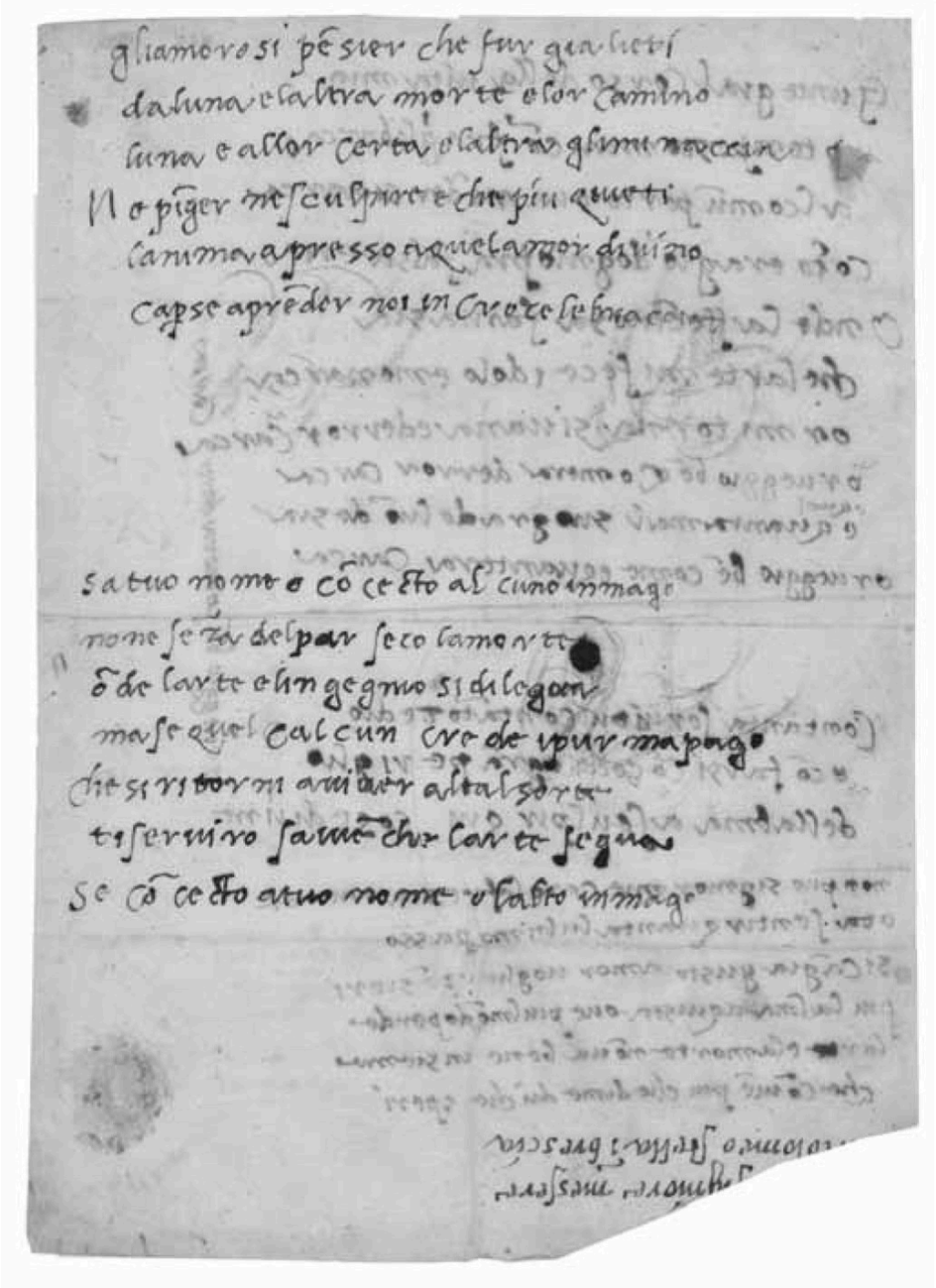
Neither painting nor sculpting can any longer quieten my soul, turned now to that divine love which on the cross, to embrace us, opened wide its arms.

Giunte gra[n]d corso della uita mia
p tempesto mare cō fragil barca
a[l] comū porto ou[er] rēder si uarca
cō to er agio dogni opra falsa erra
Onde caffe ctuosa fantasia
che larte mi fece i dolo emonarcha
or mi tor nau si ch[e] na ed error carca
or ueggio bē ch[e] omera derror carca
e quanto mai suo grado chiō desia
or ueggio bē come ecquarterra carca

un aggio bē comera derror carca

Con tanta ser uitu con tanto tedio
e cō falsi cō cocti agrā pe viglio
della bma a seu spw qui cosi duim.

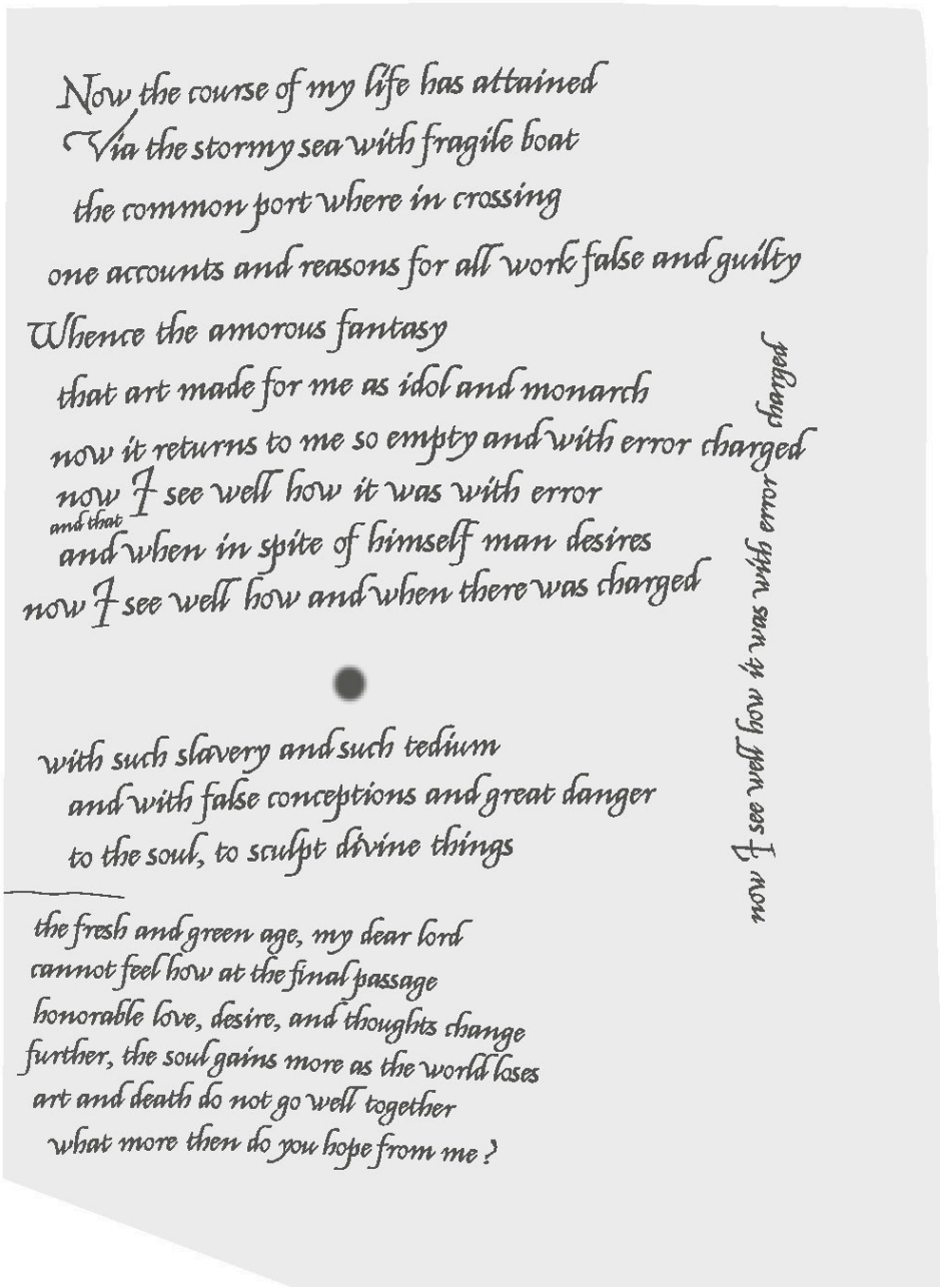
non puo signor mio caro sasso scendere
e tan sentir quanto lultimo passo
si cagia gusto amor uoglio cpē sperī
pm calma acquisto ouepiu mō do perdo
car e clamorto nō na bene in seme
che cō mē pm che dime duche sperī



7-8 and 7-9. Michelangelo, Vat. lat. 3211, fol. 95r,v (*Corpus* 423r,v). Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City

For the most part, the changes among the rewritings are minimal, though it is interesting to note that in every draft prior to Vasari's published version, the *ogni opra* ("every work") for which the speaker will be held accountable are *falsa e ria* ("false and guilty") rather than *trista e pia* ("evil and devout"). Michelangelo thereby introduces a Dantean subtext: "Poi mi rivolsi a loro e parla' io, | e cominciai: 'Francesca, i tuoi martìri | a lagrimar mi fanno tristo e pio'" ("I turned to them again, and I began, 'Francesca, your torments make me weep for grief and pity'"),[20] with a radical swerve from Dante's decidedly this-worldly response to Francesca's amorous sorrow. But more than that, with this change he also switches from two kinds of bad works to works that are both good and bad. Though at this early stage of the sonnet, *opra* seems to refer to human actions in general, it may be that in the retrospect of the whole

poem—and, especially, in addressing it to Vasari—Michelangelo wanted the term to be understood as relating more specifically to *art* works, in which case he presumably would not want to suggest that they were all bad.


Now the course of my life has attained
Via the stormy sea with fragile boat
the common port where in crossing
one accounts and reasons for all work false and guilty
Whence the amorous fantasy
that art made for me as idol and monarch
now it returns to me so empty and with error charged
now I see well how it was with error
and that
and when in spite of himself man desires
now I see well how and when there was charged
with such slavery and such tedium
and with false conceptions and great danger
to the soul, to sculpt divine things
the fresh and green age, my dear lord
cannot feel how at the final passage
honorable love, desire, and thoughts change
further, the soul gains more as the world loses
art and death do not go well together
what more then do you hope from me?
perhaps
some given sun it may then see I, now

7-10. Diagram of Figure 7-8

Where there are revisions, it is this question of *opra*-as-art around which they circulate. One page (fol. 95, Figures 7-8, 7-9; diagram, Figure 7-10), whose verso, presumably before any poetry was composed on the sheet, contained two quite separate sets of markings: some black chalk drawings that have proved very difficult to decipher (deTolnay suggests a bowed head relative to some Crucifixion project), and the address portion of a letter to Bartolommeo Stella in Brescia, of which no other part survives.[21] On the recto, Michelangelo composes the first six lines of the sonnet, as they generally appear in most of the drafts, up to "l'affectuosa fantasia, | che l'arte mi fece idolo e monarca" ("my fond imagination which made art for me

an idol and a tyrant"). At this point, however, he comes up against a thought that stumps him. He has played the art card in the context of some grand renunciation, but under what terms shall he repudiate his life's work? The next verse is written no fewer than four times on this same sheet. The semantic differences are minimal: they all suggest a realization that his metaphorical ship is laden with error that must be expunged. But the compositional activity is telling. He writes one version of the line in its orderly place; then, without crossing it out, he writes another version. At that point, he is ready to go onward, and he composes the verse that follows, with one correction of its own. But then having reached, somewhat provisionally, a completed octave, he reverts to producing another version of the problem line, now with no regard for the stanza indication, since the notion of anything like a fair copy has at this point been abandoned. And then, at some subsequent moment, turning the sheet ninety degrees clockwise, he produces yet another version in the right-hand margin, in which the invariable final rhyme word, "carca" (laden), must intersect with the same word from the first drafting of the line, which, since it was supposed to be definitive, extended farther out into the margin than did any of the rewrites.

Other writing in the predominant portrait orientation of the sheet may have necessitated the rotation. When Michelangelo stops working on the octave, with its troubled repetitions of the ship laden with error, he is only halfway down the page. He does not, however, proceed with the sestet. In fact, he will eventually turn the sheet over, using the side that contains both a drawing and the address of a letter to breeze through a version of the sestet that contains no corrections and, indeed, appears pretty much verbatim in all versions of the poem. The troubled octave and the fluent sestet (or vice versa) amount to a pattern in Michelangelo's composition. In this case, however, they undergo a kind of tmesis, whereby the poem is split in two and other poetic materials are interposed within its space. The two poetic segments composed below the octave of "Giunto è già 'l corso" on the recto and the one below the sestet on the verso are all fragments, all exist only on this single autograph sheet, and (with one minor exception) all are devoid of any authorial correction. In fact, each of them is an independent particle attempting to confront the most troubling aspect of the superintending sonnet. For editorial purposes, we may call them separate (fragmentary) poems; in reality, however, as Michelangelo produces them, they are meditations intervening in the mental space where the sonnet is composed and in the physical space of the sheet on which that composition is taking place. Directly below the octave on the recto, and in a handwriting similar enough to be contemporaneous with it, we have the briefest, darkest, and most elliptical of observations on the problem of art and salvation:

> Con tanta servitù, con tanto tedio
> e con falsi concetti e gran periglio
> dell'alma, a sculpir qui cose divine.
>
> To sculpt divine things here can be done only with great slavery and great tedium, with false ideas and with grave danger to the soul.

Following a short horizontal line, and in a more informal calligraphic style (perhaps written later than anything else on the sheet?), the six-verse fragment concludes by setting the problem in what one might call a more open dialectic:

> l'arte e la morte non va bene insieme:
> che convien più che di me dunche speri?

Art and death do not go well together: in what, then, should I place my greatest hope?

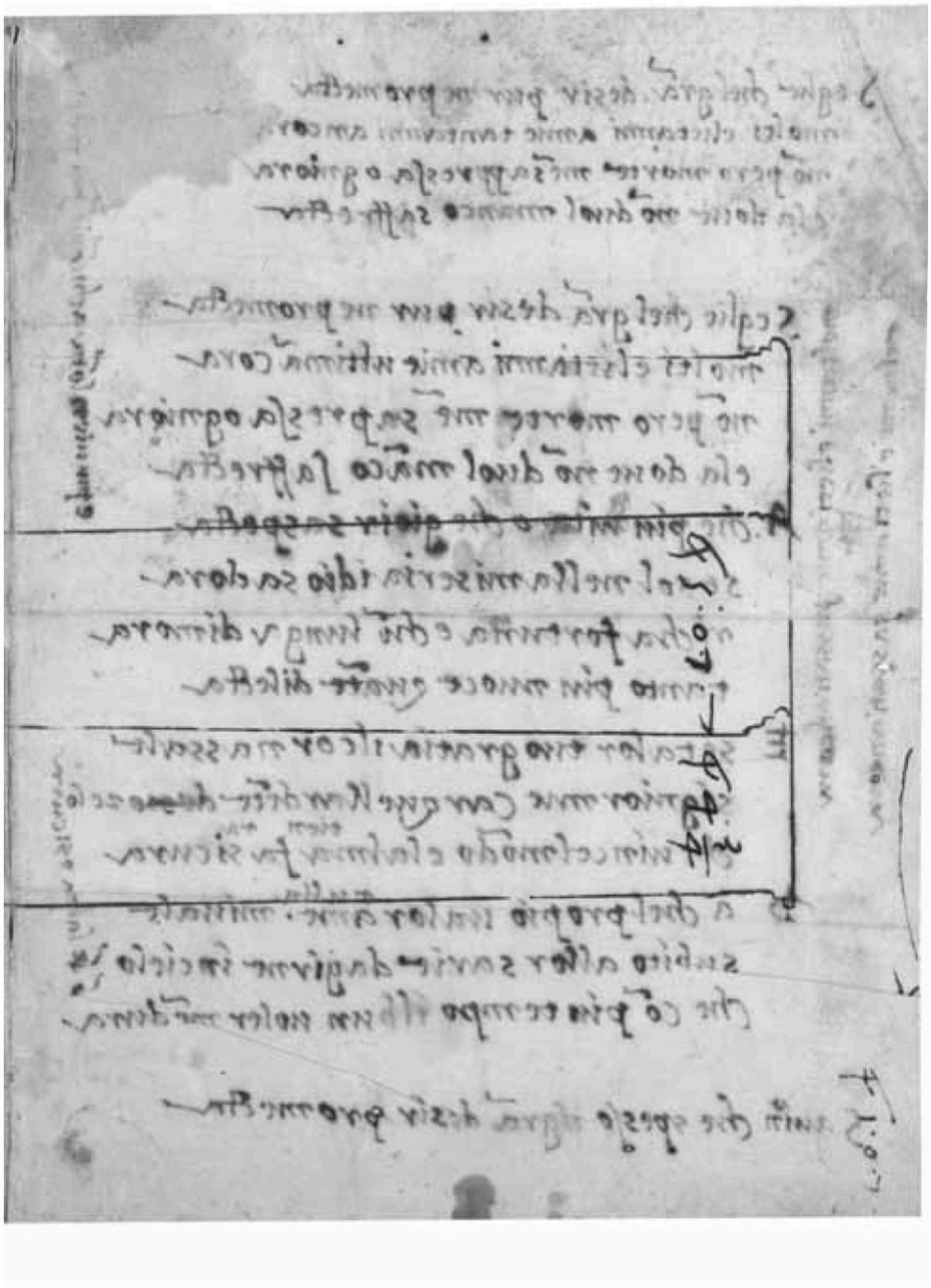
And finally, below the completing sestet of "Giunto è già 'l corso" on the verso and directly in the midst of the pre-existing black chalk drawings, Michelangelo composes a sestet[22] in which he repeats the dialectic of art and death:

S'a tuo nome ho concetto alcuno immago,
non è senza del par seco la morte,
onde l'arte e l'ingegno si dilegua.
Ma se, quel c'alcun crede, i' pur m'appago
che si ritorni a viver, a tal sorte
ti servirò, s'avvien che l'arte segua.

If in your name I have conceived some image, this never happens without death likewise appearing with it, which makes my powers of art and intellect fade away.

But if I too were happy to believe, as some do, that man returns to this life, I should in that case serve you, provided that my artistic powers came back with me.

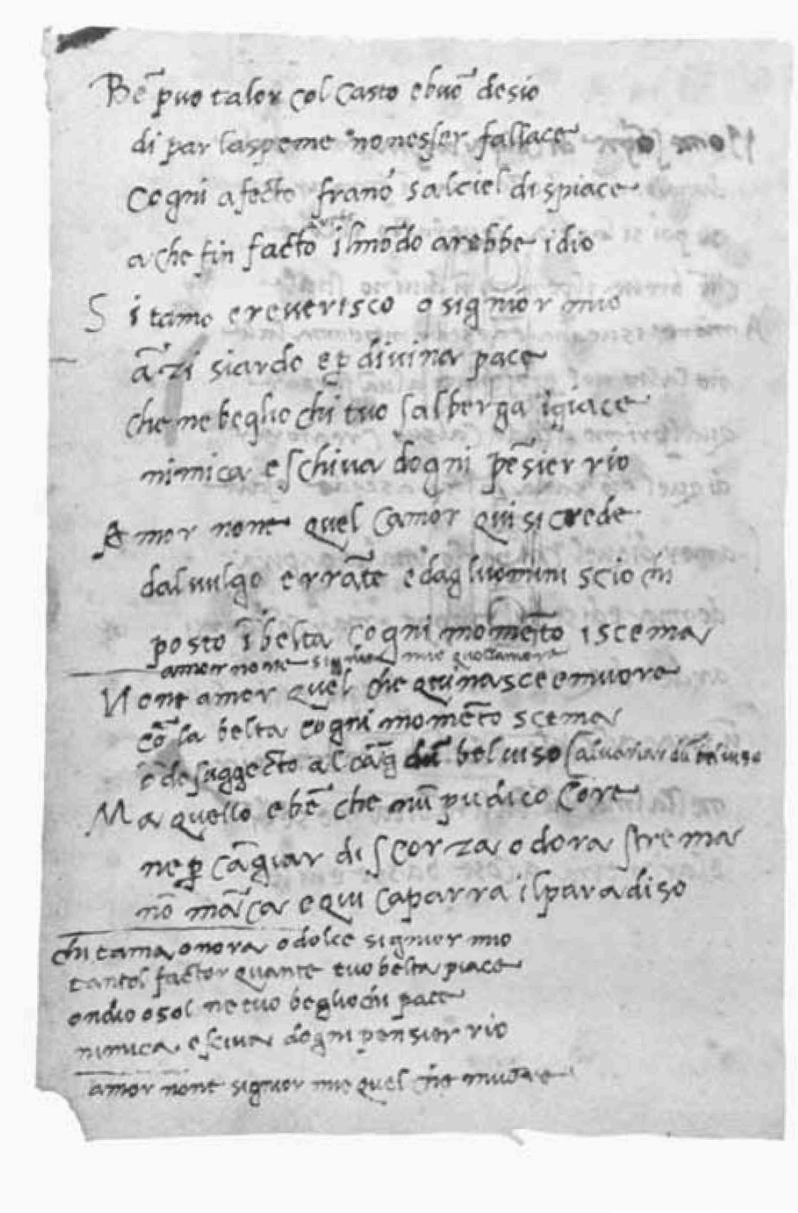
"Alcuno immago" ("some image") is exactly to the point on these multitasking pieces of composition paper. Whether or not the images conceived in God's name should include the sketch that is half obliterated by these words, clearly here Michelangelo has proposed a bold, even heretical, resolution to the problem of art and death: his genius will somehow enable him to come back to life so as to serve God. Next to this assertion (literally) we have the sestet that, far more conventionally, concludes the poem begun on the other side of the sheet with the claim that neither painting nor sculpture can quiet his soul, now that he is contemplating Christ on the cross. But he is also contemplating Christ on the cross as he observes that very image, in various states of *non finito*, on dozens of his own sheets of drafting paper—including, perhaps, this one. The life of this page, with its momentary heresy about salvation via art, reminds us that we, too, must contemplate the drawings while reading the words.



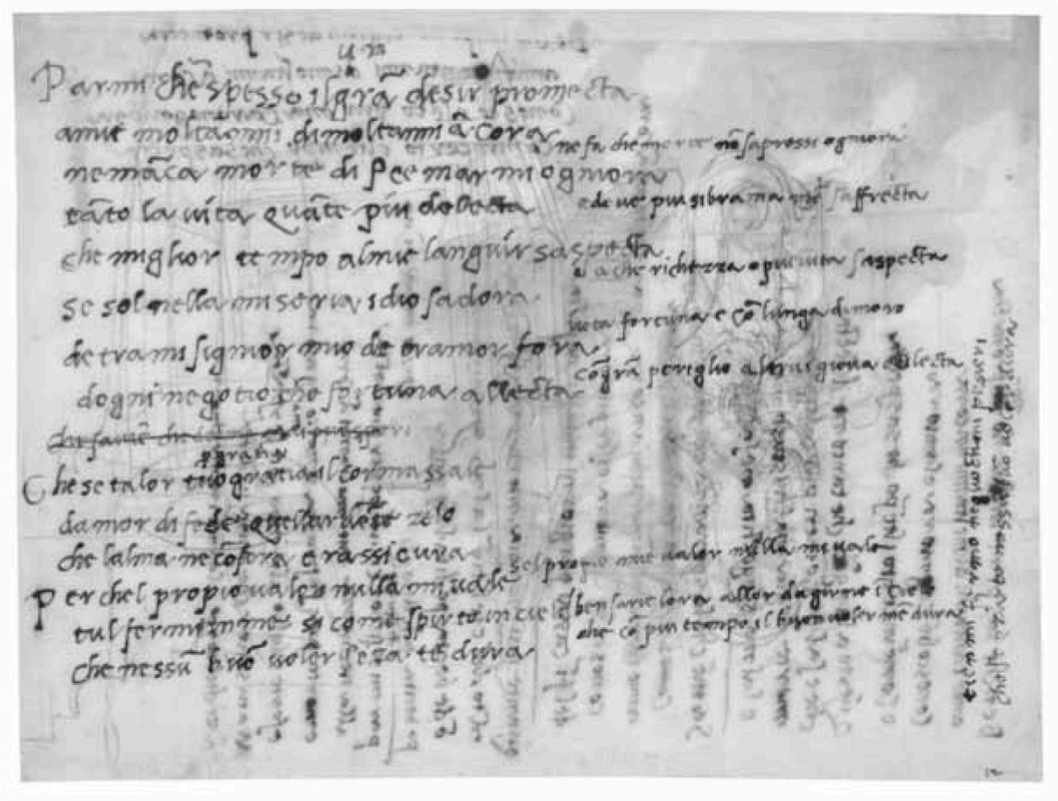
7-11 and 7-12. Michelangelo, Vat. lat. 3211, fol. 89v, 90r. Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City

There are, in fact, a considerable number of images to be found on the pages of this codex. When Michelangelo set about poetic composition in this period, he chose either empty sheets of paper or sheets that already contained one or two drawings, usually in black chalk, with a considerable amount of clear space around them. Sketches, for instance, that we can associate with the *Last Judgment*—a tiny crouched figure holding a horizontal rectangular object, probably St. Lawrence's gridiron (88v; see below, Figure 7-23); what may be a soaring figure seen from behind (once again, 88v); a pair of corporeal masses struggling to rise or to push one another down (93r; see below, Figure 7-25)—are nearly unreadable beneath far more carefully scribed passages of poetry in ink. In a different vein, and possibly from a different decade, there are similarly overwritten architectural sketches: attempts at columns

(89v, 90r, Figures 7-11, 7-12), or sketches for upper story work that might have to do with St. Peter's (53v, Figure 7-13; 91v, Figure 7-14).[23]

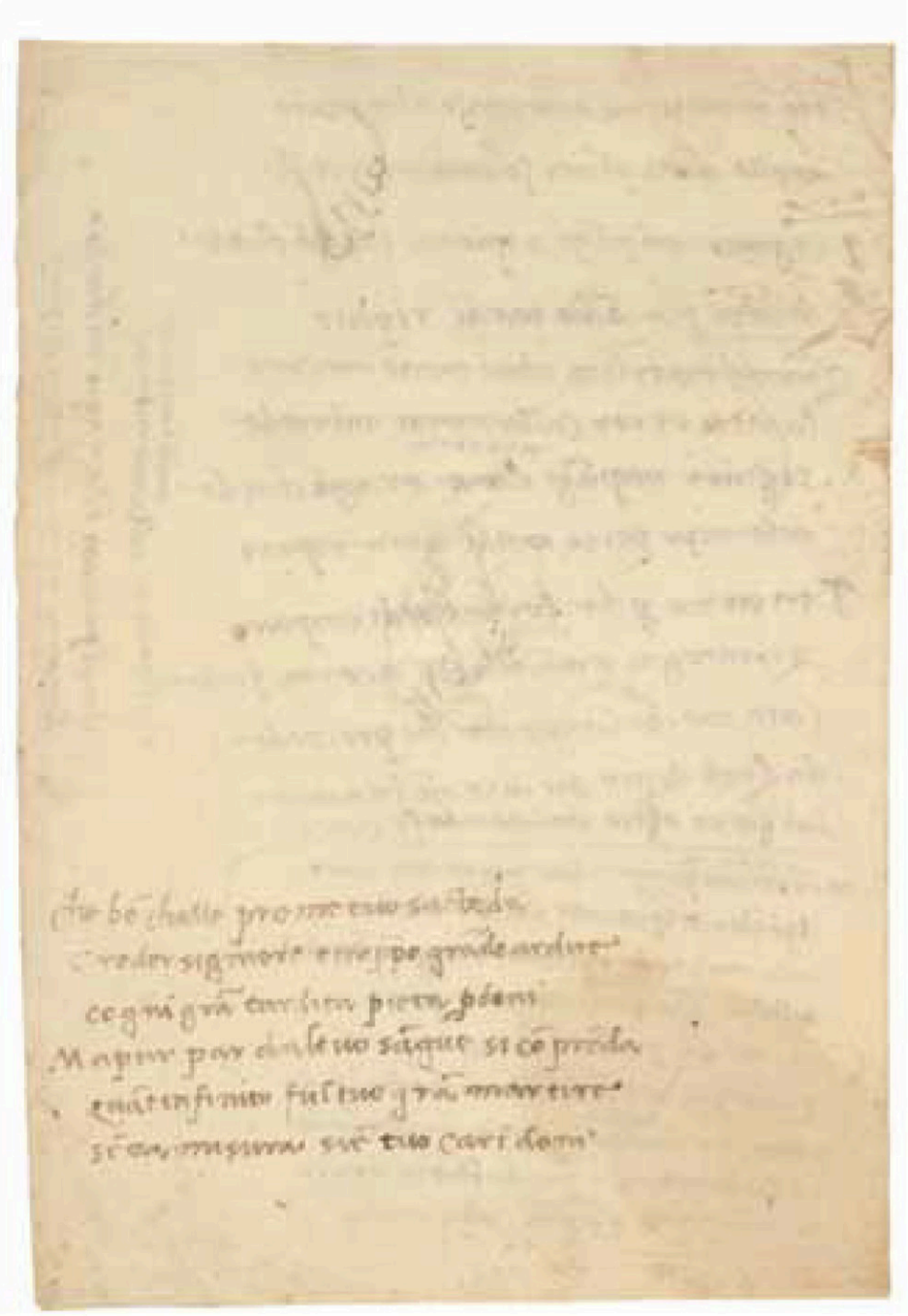


7-13. Michelangelo, Vat. lat. 3211, fol. 53v (*Corpus* 591v). Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City

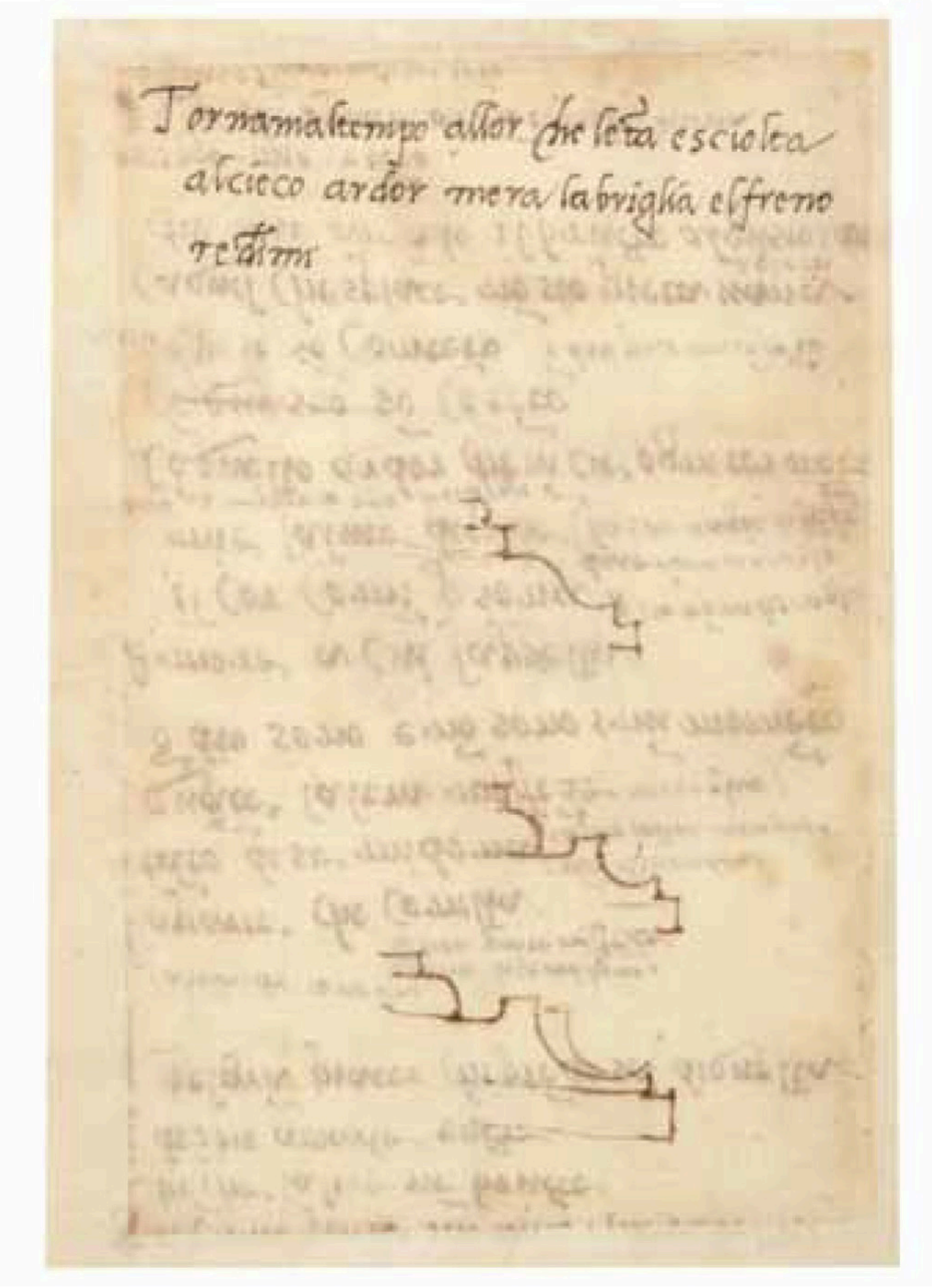


7-14. Michelangelo, Vat. lat, 3211, fol 91v (*Corpus* 602v). Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City

Just as frequently, however, drawings that exist on these sheets are circumnavigated, or at least avoided, when the paper is reused for verse-writing. A reclining figure in black chalk, variously linked to the Pauline Chapel frescoes from the 1540s or to a quite hypothetical *Agony in the Garden* project from a decade later[24] (Figure 7-15), is spared, despite the fact that Michelangelo had begun his writing on the other side of the sheet, and had to skip the upper half of this side in order to continue the poem beneath the drawing. Even the rather ungainly foot nearby (universally felt to be the work of one of those incompetent pupils who are a mainstay of the attribution scholarship) is given a wide berth. Architectural sketches, similarly, are capable of being left uncovered, even when (to my eyes, at least) they do not seem especially significant: for instance, some profiles of column bases at the opposite end of a sheet on which a poem has been broken off in midline (Figure 7-16), or a very spare drawing of a candelabrum, next to which a sonnet has been begun in ink but left fragmented just at the point where it touches the image (Figure 7-17).[25]

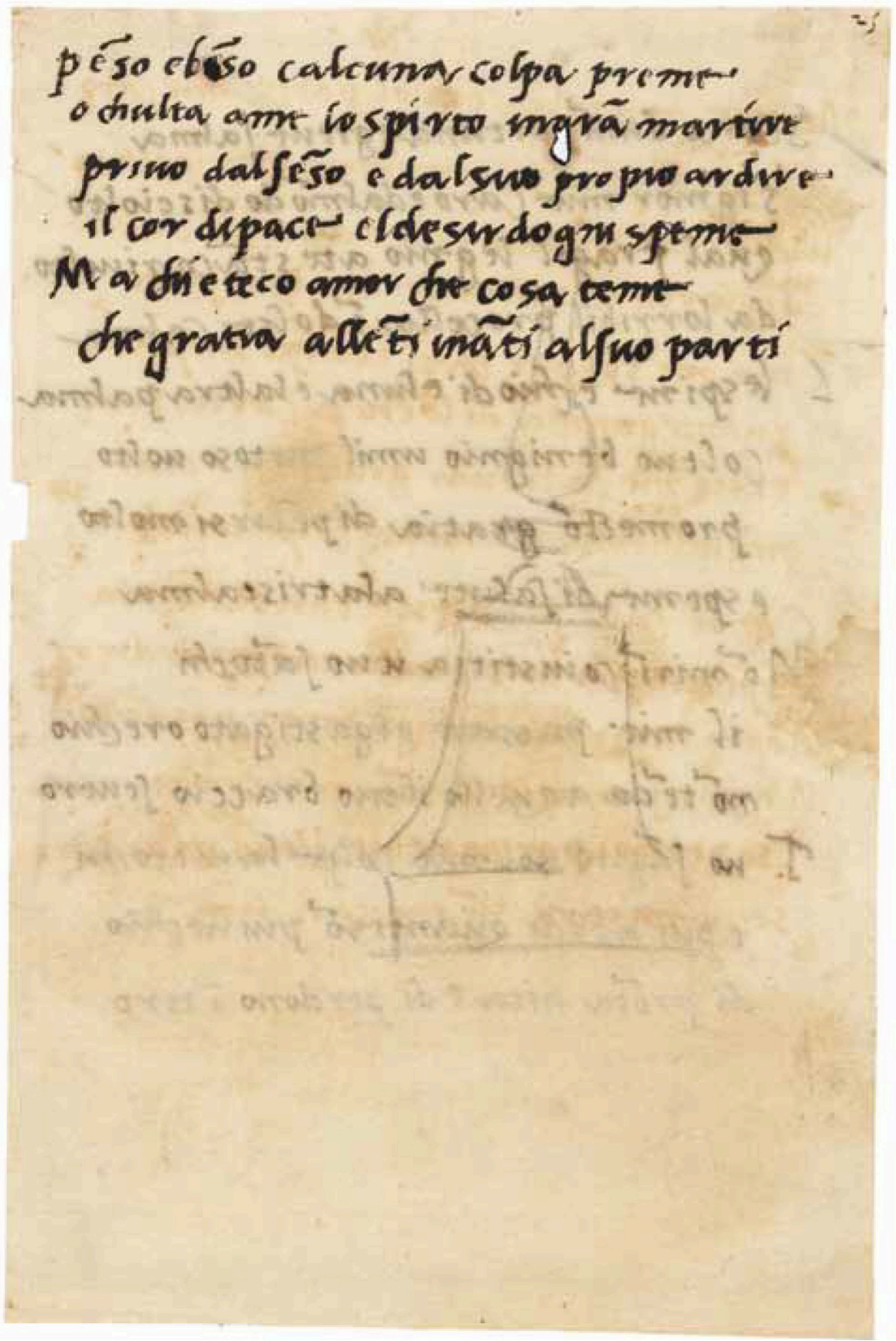


7-15. Michelangelo, Vat. lat. 3211, fol. 84r (*Corpus* 607r). Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City



7-16. Michelangelo, Vat.lat 3211, fol. 81v (*Corpus* 407v). Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City

This is, of course, a story about time as well as about space. Frequently, it seems, the codex sheets remained untouched for some years. The candelabrum on fol. 25v has been associated with everything from the Julius Tomb projects of the 1510s to the Medici Tombs of the 1530s to the final phase of the Julius Tomb installation in the 1540s. The contiguous poem fragment, however, exhibits a heavy sense of approaching death, with "colpa . . . occulta" ("hidden guilt") and "spirito in gran martire" ("soul in great torment"), and hope for redemption via love:



7-17. Michelangelo, Vat. lat. 3211, fol. 25v (*Corpus* 490v). Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City

Ma chi è teco, Amor, che cosa teme
che grazia allenti inanzi al suo partire? (G291)

But if someone is close to you, Love, what can he fear that may weaken grace before his passing?

Such expressions, and the handwriting in which they are composed, have the appearance of material from the 1550s, a decade or more later than any of the architectural undertakings for which the candelabrum may have been intended. The same sort of temporal gap can be postulated in regard to the sketches that reflect work on the *Last Judgment*: the little gridiron-toting figure on fol. 88v (see below, Figure 7-23), for instance, seems to belong to the stages of planning the fresco in the mid-1530s, but the poem (G269)—all about *anni* and *guai* and "della vita . . . ore brieve e corte" (years, woes, "the brief and short hours of life")—probably reflects its author's mood after the death of Vittoria Colonna in 1547. In short, these pieces of paper were lightly touched by the artist's hand, then lay around the studio for years. Why they were not used for further sketching, we can't say. But, for some combination of reasons having to do with the inconsequential quality of the visual work on them and the amount of space it left, they were ripe for conversion into poetic scratch paper when the muse struck.

Pages that manage to cross space and time in these ways give us permission, at least in certain instances, to take account of all the markings on the sheet of paper, not because Michelangelo was designing them as organic works of art, but because their constituent parts add up to documents in a life. This chapter will close with two attempts at performing such calculus. The first instance is quite rational: the sheet takes the form of a curiously constituted filing system that allows us to traverse a multimedia path across the artist's creativity. The second depends on a more complex, and unconscious, itinerary through his visual and poetic career. As it happens, the two sheets are adjacent within the Vatican codex.

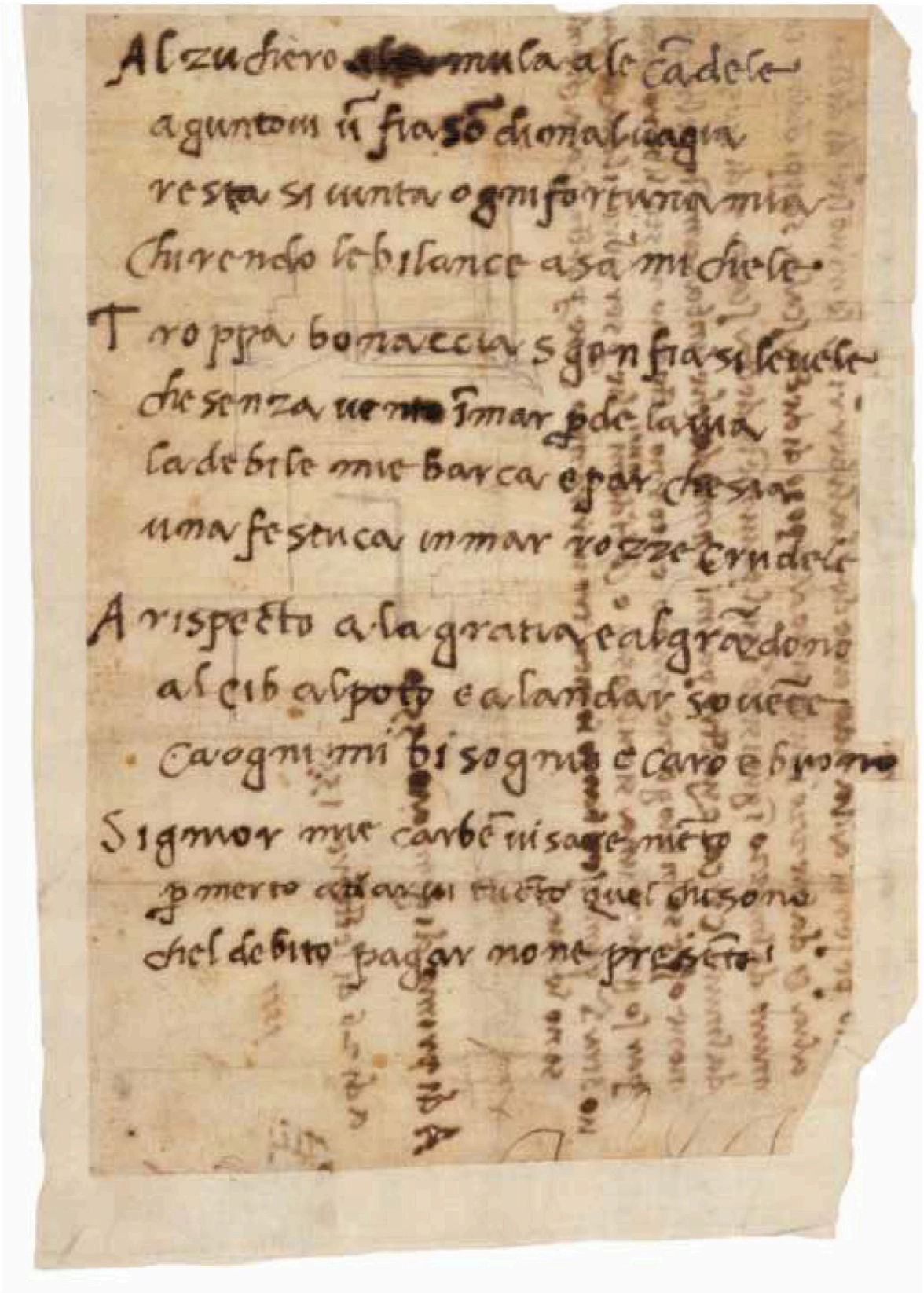
Fol. 87 (Figures 7-18, 7-19) was probably first used by Michelangelo for a set of architectural black chalk sketches, now quite difficult to decipher, which take up much of the space on the recto.[26] If, as some have argued, they form part of the project for St. Peter's, they would date from the end of the 1540s or the early 1550s. To be sure, it is risky to assign an overly specific destination to such drawings as this: architectural sketches from these decades can easily have operated in a conceptual space inhabited at once by San Lorenzo, the Palazzo Farnese, St. Peter's, and imaginary constructions that were never destined to be built.[27] The only reason we might attempt to nail down a destination in this case is that it would help us to understand whether, and for how long, the sheet may have lain fallow between the time of the chalk drawing and that of the various materials in ink that probably came later. Whatever the precise answer to that question, it seems reasonably clear that the architectural sketch on the recto represents one moment in time, while everything else on both sides represents another.

So far as this other moment is concerned, we may begin with the verso, which introduces another complication in the archaeology of the sheet. What we have on this side of the page is the final section of a letter, the beginning of which has been cut off. How large the sheet may have originally been and at what point it was cropped, it is difficult to say. Neither the drawing nor the text on the recto seem truncated; both, in fact, sit squarely, if somewhat massively, on the sheet as we have it. Nor are the dimensions of this page very different from most others in the Vatican codex. Possibly these circumstances ought to suggest a different order for what was produced on the sheet. But what is more certain is that the letter was a draft not considered to be of great importance by some early archivist of the sheet, who cut it

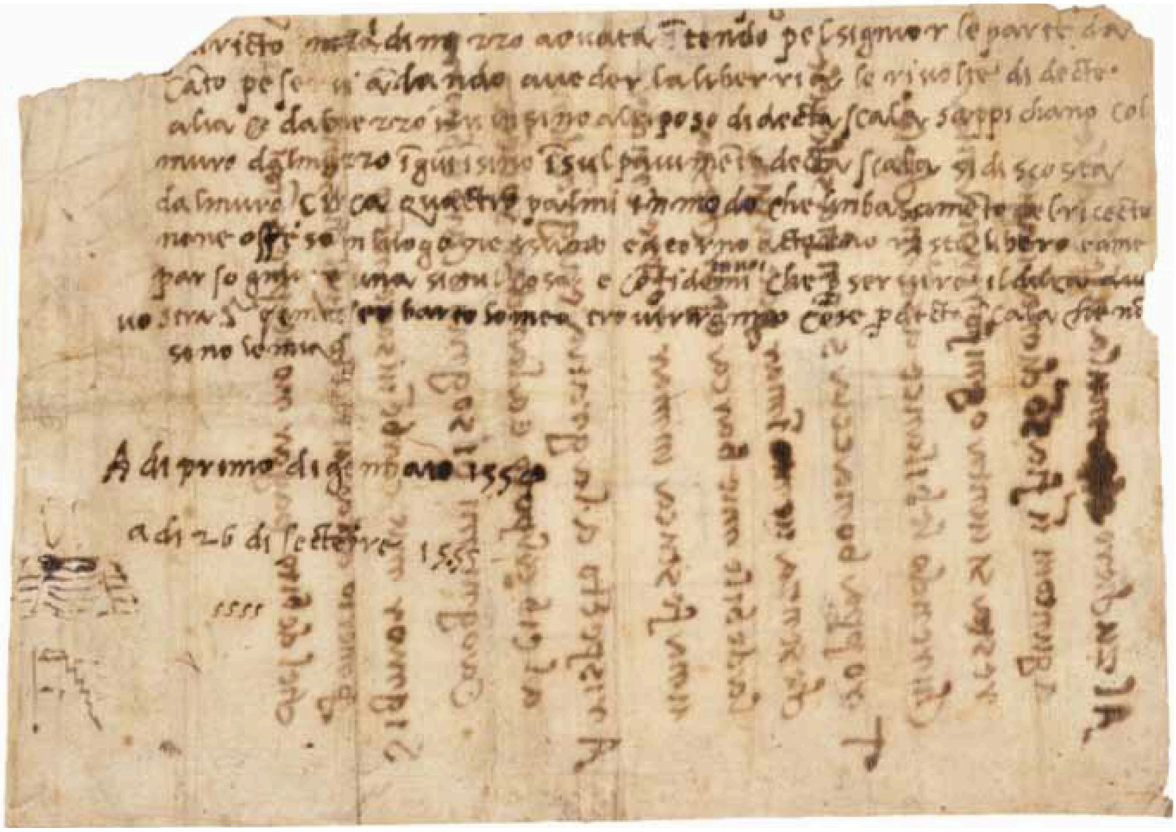
down (probably not excising very much) to dimensions dictated by the visual and poetic materials on the other side.

It is, however, less important to speculate on what is missing than to place this letter within the considerable relevant paper trail that we do possess in complete form. The text of this fragment reads:

> The middle oval section I intend for the master, the side sections for the servants going to see the library. The returns of the said wings from halfway up to the landing of the staircase are attached to the wall. From the middle down to the paved floor of the said staircase is detached from the wall by about four *palmi*, so that the entrance of the vestibule is not encroached upon and allows free passage. I seem to have dreamt something like this and rely on you to serve your Lord Duke and [on] Messer Bartolomeo to find a means of doing the said staircase other than mine. [28]



7-18. Michelangelo, Vat. lat. 3211, fol. 87r (*Corpus* 526r). Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City



7-19. Michelangelo, Vat. lat. 3211, fol. 87v (*Corpus* 526v). Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City

The subject is the famous, and famously eccentric, vestibule staircase leading to the Laurentian Library (Figure 7-20).[29] Michelangelo, who has stayed outside of Florence for twenty years already and will so remain until his body is brought back to the city after another decade, responds to Medicean requests by a series of communiqués from Rome, of which material this forms a part.

It appears that Michelangelo was in touch principally with Vasari and Ammannati: to the former he sent a rather detailed letter, of which we have an early copy as well as a reprint in the second edition of the *Lives*, itself cut short so as to concentrate on Vasari himself; to the latter, he sent a clay model, which is lost.[30] That division doubtless expresses a hierarchy in Michelangelo's mind between the engagement by one colleague at a conceptual level and by the other at a material level. The draft on fol. 87, though missing its address, is doubtless to Vasari,[31] and it is interesting both for what it shares with the other, fuller accounts and for what it does not share. About the actual physical form of the staircase, there is general agreement. The two startling innovations—and they remain so in the staircase as we have it—are the oval shape of the stair units and the idea of a separate central pathway for the Duke as opposed to the more marginal access permitted to everyone else. In one sense, these demands work together: the point of greatest artistic bravura must not be demeaned by the feet of mere servants. But in another sense, they produce the biggest stumbling block for the design, not resolved in any of Michelangelo's instructions, which is the integration of ovals and rectangles, itself perhaps resolved in the end by the bizarre expedient of eliminating the side stairs halfway up, thus requiring nobility and commoners to take the same route as they get closer to their goal.

7-20. Michelangelo, Biblioteca Laurenziana, view of the stairs from above. San Lorenzo, Florence

Michelangelo, of course, knows that he is operating in a curious realm, both because his design is strange and because the long distance system of putting it into practice is equally so. It is no surprise, then, that in every one of the texts he frames his idea in a kind of irreality. This appears most explicitly in the complete Vasari letter:

> I recall a certain staircase, as it were in a dream, but I do not think it is exactly what I thought of then, because it is a clumsy affair, as I recall it. However, I will describe it.[32]

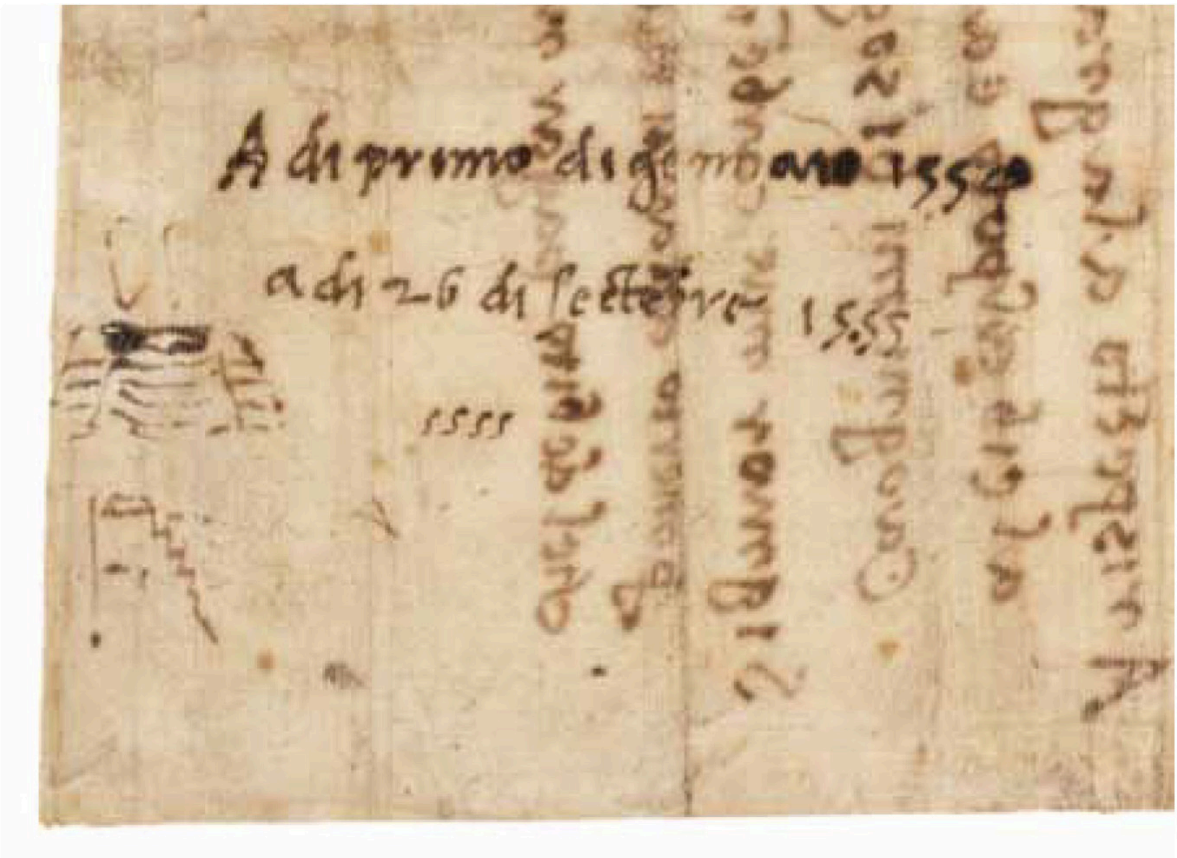
The same idea appears in the letter to his nephew in which the Vasari communiqué was enclosed ("I'm giving him, as if in a dream, the little information I can recall about it" [33]) and on the codex sheet which is our principal subject. In all cases, Michelangelo is putting the concept at two removes: it started as a dream, and now it is an imperfectly recollected dream.

The other kind of remove—that is, between Florence and Rome—is also clearly present in his thoughts. All of the communications worry the question of the relative artistic input of those responsible for this construction. In the full Vasari letter, he says, "I'm writing nonsense, but I know very well that you and Messer Bartolomeo will make something of it."[34] When writing to the underling Ammannati, on the other hand, he fittingly limits this area of artistic liberty to the aspect of ornamentation: "There is no need for me to tell you anything about bases, fillets for these plinths, and other ornaments, because you are resourceful, and being on the spot will see what is needed much better than I can."[35] In what we have of the letter on fol. 87, Michelangelo puts the matter somewhat differently, expressing a reliance on the

two long-distance collaborators and, especially, on their fealty to the Duke (not mentioned explicitly in any of the other letters), to produce a staircase with "cose . . . che non sono le mia" ("things that are not mine"). This takes him a notable step further from artistic control. Vasari and Ammannati are not merely pointmen who have to solve problems in fulfilling his wishes; they are liable to serve the Duke by realizing the project in ways that are defined as explicitly not Michelangelo's own.

It is significant, I think, that the text concludes with this edgy assertion. The page is not cut off at this point; on the contrary, there is considerable empty space, occupied first by a date: "A dì primo di gennaio 1554." And, a little bit below that in different ink, another date: "A dì 26 di settembre 1555." The fact that there is any date at all on a letter that does not appear to have been completed or signed or sent is already noteworthy, suggesting that Michelangelo was taking this text very seriously as one that he might well have transcribed into fair copy and then dispatched. The presence of two different dates (which has not been explained satisfactorily) suggests, as do so many things among these sketches, a gap of time during which this sheet remained of interest to the artist.[36] Since the second date is just two days before the full letter to Vasari, and since the script of the first date appears to be of a piece with the text above it, it may be that Michelangelo has been in effect sitting on the problem for nine months (presuming that the earlier date is given in Florentine form). And the problem in this case is not so much the design of the staircase as the question of what will happen when the idea leaves Michelangelo's imagination and travels to Vasari's entrepreneurship and Ammannati's constructing skills. If the letter broke off with "things that are not mine," it could only be resumed when he had stepped back from this complete loss of control and developed the formula of *cosa al proposito* ("something appropriate").

There is, however, one more set of notations on this side of the page. In the remaining space, first of all, there appear four small vertical wavy lines that to my eyes closely resemble the writing of the second date; in a curious manner, they seem to mimic the number "1555" while also edging toward a representation that might be connected with the rounded rather than squared off design of the staircase. But that is highly speculative.[37] What is clearly present, farther to the left and again in ink similar to the second date, is a pair of tiny attempts to render a staircase such as the one he was describing (Figure 7-21). It is perhaps appropriate to the bi-form plan in his head that Michelangelo here produced one straight-on view with a center that suggests convex shapes framed by more rectangular sides and one side view that consists of purely right angles. But neither of these miniscule doodles can have been intended as a show-and-tell for his collaborators. Four years later, as we know from the letter to Ammannati, Michelangelo sent a model. What is striking in the communiqués of 1555, on the other hand, is that his instructions appear to have been purely verbal. This pair of postage stamp-sized representations can only have been laid down once the sheet was definitively *not* going to be sent to Vasari. For all that he has by September of 1555 worked out a more hopeful formula for reconciling his ideas with the Florentine realization of them, these drawings still appear to signal a renunciation of any central role in the end product.



7-21. Detail of Figure 7-19

It is in this context, I think, that we need to understand the one remaining piece of text on fol. 87, which is a sonnet on the recto, found on no other autograph sheet but here rendered complete and without corrections:

Al zucchero, a la mula, a le candele,
aggiuntovi un fiascon di malvagia,
resta sì vinta ogni fortuna mia,
ch'i' rendo le bilance a san Michele.
Troppa bonaccia sgonfia sì le vele,
che senza vento in mar perde la via
la debile mie barca, e par che sia
una festuca in mar rozz'e crudele.
A rispetto a la grazia e al gran dono,
al cib', al poto e a l'andar sovente
c'a ogni mi' bisogno è caro e buono,
Signor mie car, ben vi sare' nïente
per merto a darvi tutto quel ch'i' sono:
ché 'l debito pagar non è presente. (G299)

The sugar, the mule, the candles, to which was added a flagon of malmsey: these so outweigh all my resources that I am handing back the scales to St. Michael.

Too much calm weather has taken the wind from my sails so completely that my fragile boat lies lost on a windless sea, or seems like a wisp of straw on a rough and cruel sea.

> Compared with your kindness and your great gifts—the food, the drink, the means of moving readily around, which is something very welcome and helpful for all my needs—my dear lord, I should count as nothing in terms of merit, even were I to give you all that I am: for it is no present to repay a debt.

This remarkable poem—probably written, like the letter on the verso, to Vasari—completes the picture of an octogenarian Michelangelo who is both blessed and cursed by the support of younger colleagues who love and revere him. The creation of ambitious architectural projects from a distance, which depended on these same collaborators, now reveals itself to be of a piece in Michelangelo's mind with all the problematics of receiving well-meant gifts and having to be grateful for them. To be in social debt and to lose control over artistic projects: these are joined on this sheet as ominous consequences of old age.

Throughout the artist's correspondence, in fact, he reveals himself to have a complex relation to gratitude, as was evidenced already, though in a relatively playful vein, by the exchange of presents and poems that surrounded the production and circulation of epitaphs for Luigi del Riccio's nephew during the 1540s.[38] So far as the artist's latter years are concerned, the poem on fol. 87 stands in an uncannily close relationship to the very passage in Vasari's 1568 *Life of Michelangelo* that mentions what are presumably the same candles for which Michelangelo is expressing his troubled gratitude:

> He would not accept presents from anyone, because it appeared to him that if anyone gave him something, he would be bound to him for ever. This sober life kept him very active and in want of very little sleep, and often during the night, not being able to sleep, he would rise to labour with the chisel; having made a cap of thick paper, and over the centre of his head he kept a lighted candle, which in this way threw light over where he was working without encumbering his hands. Vasari, who had seen the cap several times, reflecting that he did not use wax, but candles of pure goat's tallow, which are excellent, sent him four bundles of these, which weighted forty libbre. And his servant with all courtesy carried them to him at the second hour of the evening, and presented them to him; but Michelagnolo refused them, declaring that he did not want them; and then the servant said: "They have broken my arms on the way between the bridge and here, and I shall not carry them back to the house. Now here in front of your door there is a solid heap of mud; they will stand in it beautifully, and I will set them all alight." Michelagnolo said to him: "Put them down here, for I will not have you playing pranks at my door."[39]

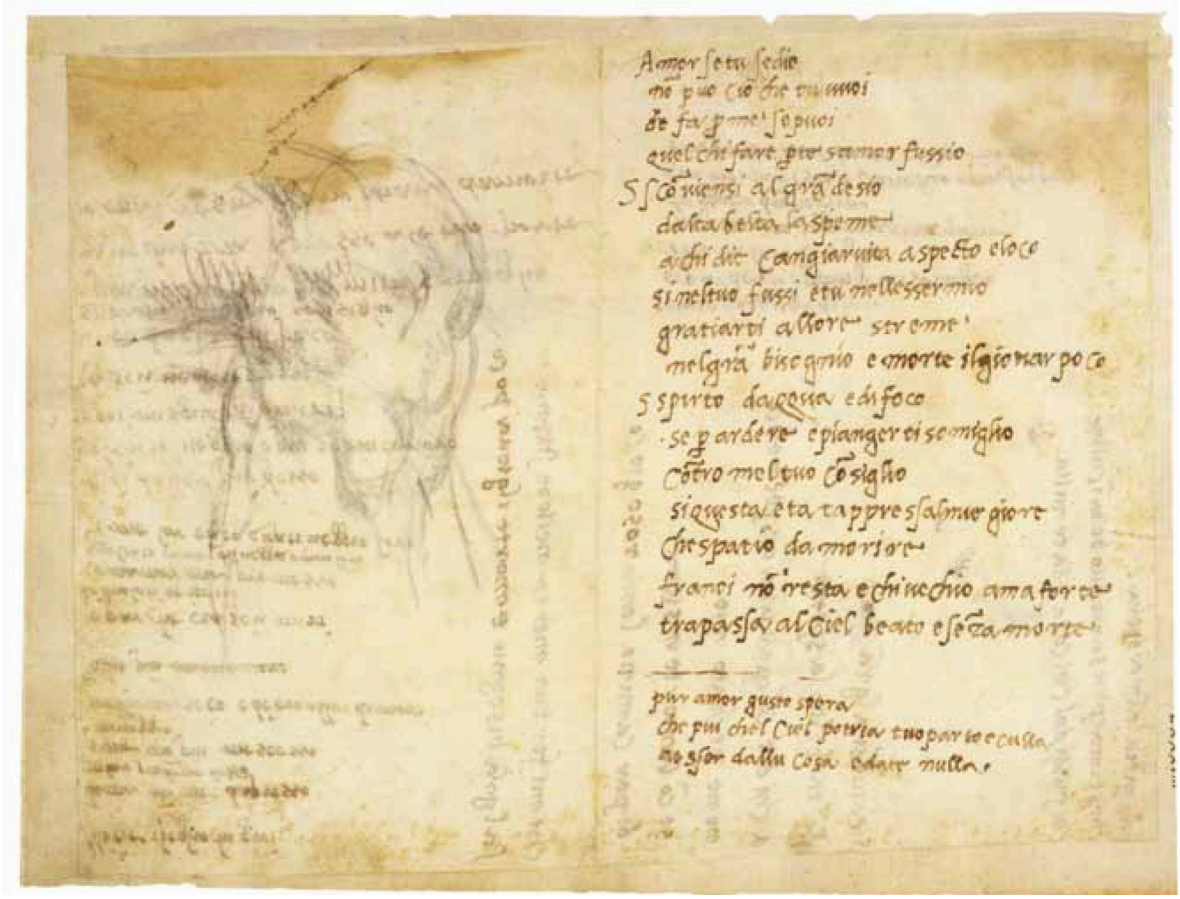
In a typical slide of logic, Vasari seems to move backwards from the general description of Michelangelo's unwillingness to labor under an obligation, to his need for perpetual vigilance and, therefore, his lack of sleep, to his nocturnal sculpting habits, to Vasari's own consequent gift of candles, so ungallantly received—which, finally, proves the point about gratitude with which the sequence began.

But the poem that may in part have provoked the Vasarian passage offers a far subtler account of these difficulties. In the face of these gifts, Michelangelo experiences a kind of annihilation. The only return he can imagine is not even directed toward his generous friend but rather toward the Archangel Michael, to whom he cedes the very faculty of making equations between gifts and thanks. Rewriting the opening of the *Purgatorio*, in which Dante uses the full sails as an image for his high level of narrative energy now that he is getting closer to the end of his journey: "Per correr miglior acque alza le vele | omai la navicella del

mio ingegno" ("to course over better waters the little bark of my genius now hoists her sails"),[40] Michelangelo associates his condition of indebtedness with deadly stasis. If the context is the-beginning-of-the-end, Dante focuses on the beginning and Michelangelo on the end. Though the sonnet begins with *things*—and rather humdrum ones at that, rendering its tone pedestrian, if not downright comical—the poet transforms the nature of the debt from one that can be repaid in kind to one for which only his whole being ("tutto quel ch'i' sono") has any hope of providing the necessary recompense.

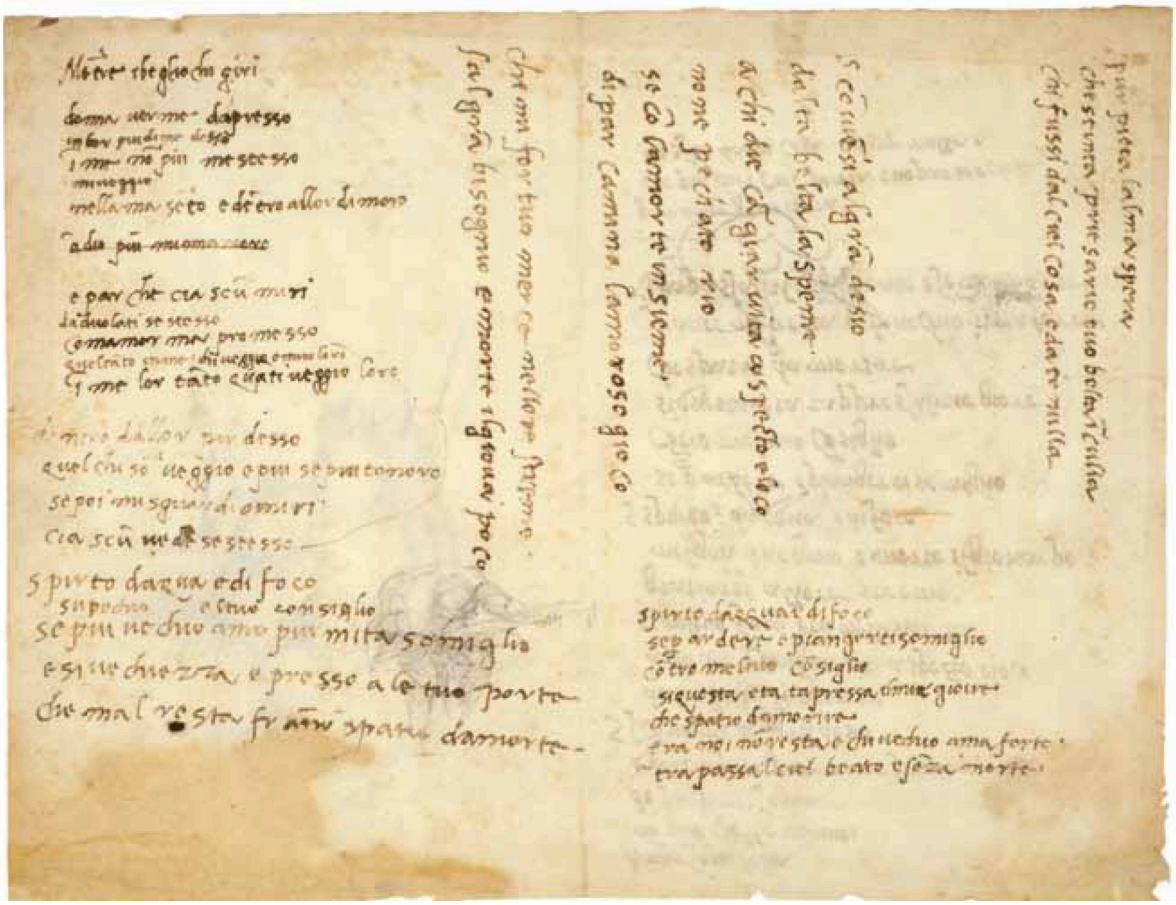
Even that reimbursement turns out to be hopeless, however. The final line reveals the heritage of Michelangelo's thinking in the world of Seneca's *De beneficiis* and all those meditations on the Graces that had formed an important part of Medicean Neoplatonism.[41] Only here, the beautiful reciprocity of love and gift-exchange is viewed in a minor key. If gifts are debts, then no amount of return can ever provide escape from the cycle; payback can never become the kind of gift that set things in motion in the first place.[42] On this sheet of paper, Michelangelo is experiencing a death-like inertia. He can't complete the story of gift-giving, he can't complete his work, he is dependent on others both for his own artistic accomplishments and for his very material life. The Laurentian Library is reduced to a couple of doodles, long-distance attempts at architecture produce elements *che non sono cose mie*, and the by now out-dated St. Peter's chalk sketch (if that is what it is) has been obliterated by a poem in which a gracious gesture of thanks transforms itself into a circle of futility.

Fol. 88 of the Vatican Codex (Figures 7-22, 7-23; also see 7-24, diagramming 7-23),[43] or at least its recto, is rare within this manuscript for having been worked on exclusively in the landscape, rather than the portrait, orientation, though a line down the center suggests that Michelangelo may have inscribed each half as a vertical sheet in its own right. The fact that this folio is larger than most of the sheets in the codex might further explain this practice. The left half is occupied by a single black chalk drawing representing a preternaturally articulated knee, which, by one sort of filiation, can be linked to various knees in the *Last Judgment*. And there is certainly every reason to suppose that the drawing was executed during the 1530s by way of experimenting and of visualizing on paper what he would soon thereafter realize in fresco on the Sistine altar wall. Yet this almost disembodied body part, contextualized only by a vague suggestion of the upper leg and an intensely rendered bit of darkness probably meant to indicate the juncture of upper and lower leg at the back of the knee, also asks to be placed within another, less specifically teleological framework. As commentators have long suggested, a drawing like this one seems to hark back toward Michelangelo's sketches from life thirty years earlier, while at the same time launching itself into a new realm where parts of the body take on a sort of elemental abstraction.[44] In effect, a drawing as intense and beautiful as this one exists in the realm of the particular and the representational—call it a study for St. Lawrence—while its shapes and its draftsmanly medium locate it also in some earthly version of the Platonic world of forms. And that is a duality that seems also to characterize Michelangelo's verbal sketches on the same sheets of paper.



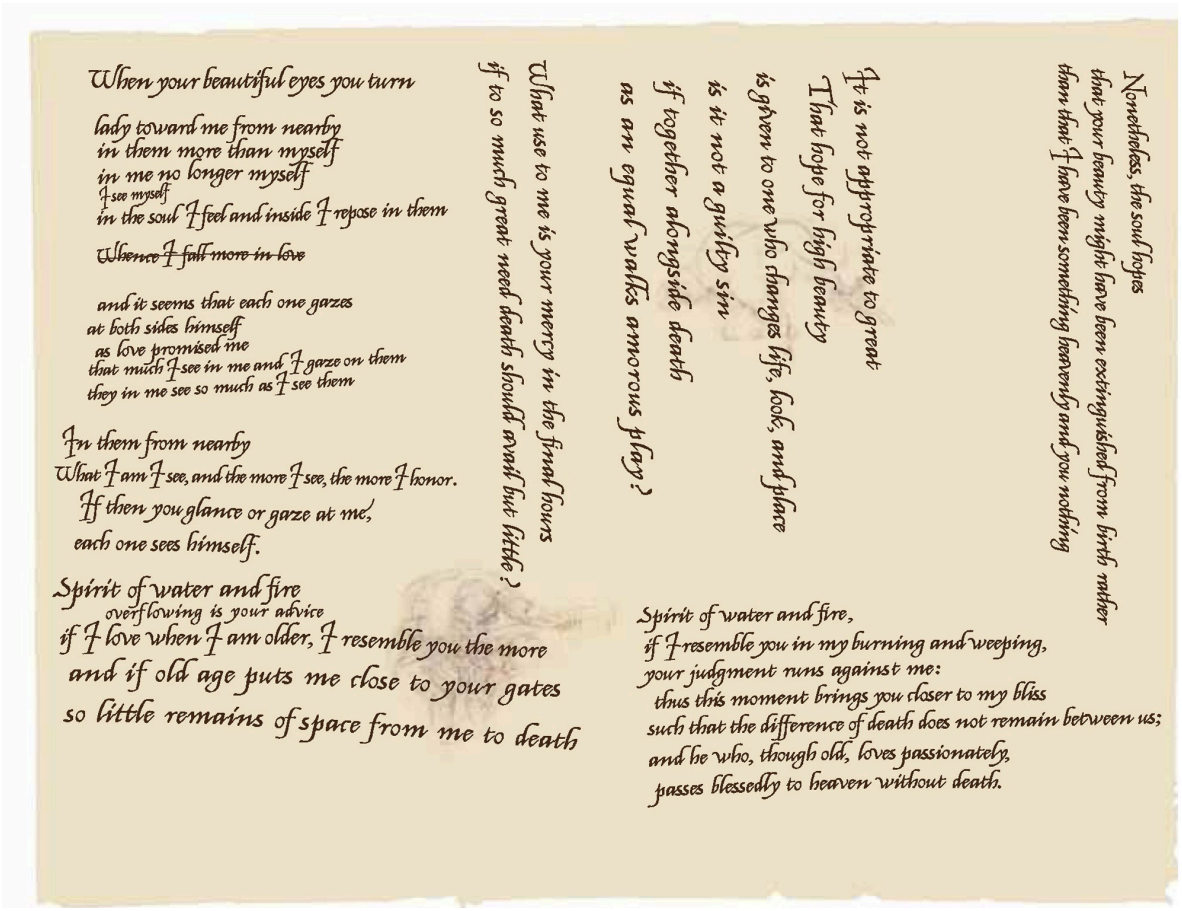
7-22. Michelangelo, Vat. lat. 3211, fol. 88r (*Corpus* 356r). Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City

The sheet containing the drawing of the knee was augmented on its right half, probably some considerable time later, by a draft of "Amor, se tu se' dio" (G262). The specific dating, to be sure, depends on such factors as the chronology of producing the *Last Judgment* and the biographical circumstances, possibly involving Vittoria Colonna, that might have inspired the poem; more significantly for our purposes, it also depends on our surmises about the time that elapsed between Michelangelo's drafts of the poem and the place of this version on that timeline. [45] The handwriting in which "Amor, se tu se' dio" is variously drafted on four different sheets in the Vatican codex appears similar enough to suggest a relatively brief period of composition. It is also generally agreed that the draft on fol. 88 is the earliest that we have.



7-23. Michelangelo, Vat. lat. 3211, fol. 88v (*Corpus* 356v). Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City

There is a moment, then, at which Michelangelo considers this side of the page, including the beautiful sketch he had produced some five to ten years earlier, elects to preserve it, either folds or does not fold the paper but in any event keeps it in the same (unaccustomed) horizontal orientation, and inscribes a perfect seventeen-line madrigal. The subject, familiar to us from other multiply revised lyrics, is the problematic conjunction of old age and passionate love; and the metaphorical engine, which we have also observed before, is the notion of some sort of identity exchange:


When your beautiful eyes you turn
lady toward me from nearby
in them more than myself
in me no longer myself
I see myself
in the soul I feel and inside I repose in them
Whence I fall more in love
and it seems that each one gazes
at both sides himself
as love promised me
that much I see in me and I gaze on them
they in me see so much as I see them
In them from nearby
What I am I see, and the more I see, the more I honor.
If then you glance or gaze at me,
each one sees himself.
Spirit of water and fire
overflowing is your advice
if I love when I am older, I resemble you the more
and if old age puts me close to your gates
so little remains of space from me to death
What use to me is your mercy in the final hours
if to so much great need death should avail but little?
It is not appropriate to great
That hope for high beauty
is given to one who changes life, look, and place
is it not a guilty sin
if together alongside death
as an equal walks amorous play?
Nonetheless, the soul hopes
that your beauty might have been extinguished from birth rather
than that I have been something heavenly and you nothing
Spirit of water and fire,
if I resemble you in my burning and weeping,
your judgment runs against me:
thus this moment brings you closer to my bliss
such that the difference of death does not remain between us;
and he who, though old, loves passionately,
passes blessedly to heaven without death.

7-24. Diagram of Figure 7-23

Amor, se tu se' dio,
non puo' ciò che tu vuoi?
Deh fa' per me, se puoi,
quel ch'i' fare per te, s'Amor fuss'io.
Sconviensi al gran desio
d'alta beltà la speme . . . .

Love, if you are a god, can you not do what you wish? Ah do for me, if you can, what I should do for you, if I were Love. It is not appropriate to great desire that hope for high beauty . . . .

These opening lines, as it happens, never change in the differing versions of the poem that we possess. The proposition is constant, but its consequences and meanings will vary.

That fact takes us off this recto and on to other sheets of the codex. Between the earliest and latest of these drafts, there are radical changes of direction. All versions begin with the premise that Amor is supposed to be omnipotent and with the request that he do for the speaker what the speaker would do for him; all of them then begin to sketch out a condition, as yet unspecified, in which powerful desire is inappropriate. At the point where this condition is named as old age, the drafts diverge slightly, and from there they grow yet farther apart. The version of the poem that is printed in all modern editions essentially confirms the hopeless inappropriateness of the *senex amans*:

Pon nel tuo grado il mio:
dolce gli fie chi 'l preme?
Ché gratia per poc'or doppia 'l martire.
Ben ti voglio ancor dire:
che sarie morte, s'a' miseri è dura,
a chi muor giunto a l'alta suo ventura?

Make my will yours: can what oppresses someone become sweet for him? For a grace that is short-lived is a double torment. Indeed, I wish to say more to you: if death is hard even for those who are wretched, what will it be for one who dies at the height of his good fortune?

But the poet gains this simplicity and clarity essentially by cancelling any development of the conceit by which he switches identities with Amor. The final five lines, in other words, do not depend in any way on "Pon nel tuo grado il mio," and the rather heavy-handed "Ben ti voglio ancor dire" (for which there is no equivalent in any other version) all but explicitly points toward the mode of straightforward sententiae rather than of circuitous conceit.

The longest, and probably earliest, version, to return to fol. 88r, makes it apparent what those conceits might be, should the speaker choose *not* to assert his *voler dire* so bluntly:[46]

S'i' nel tuo fussi, e tu nell'esser mio,
gratiarti all'ore estreme?
Nel gran bisognio è morte il giovar poco.
Spirto d'aqqua e di foco,
se per ardere e pianger ti somiglio,
contro m'è 'l tuo consiglio:
si questa età t'appress'al mie gio[i]re,
che spatio da morire
fra noi non resta; e chi vechio ama forte
trapassa al ciel beato e senza morte.

If I were in your being and you in mine
would you be blessed in the final hours?
In a state of great need, death avails little.
Spirit of water and fire,
if I resemble you in my burning and weeping,
your judgment runs against me:
thus this moment brings you closer to my bliss
such that the difference of death does not remain between us;
and he who, though old, loves passionately,
passes blessedly to heaven without death.

Here, as well as in the intervening fifteen-line version, the exchange of identities between Amor and the speaker is taken seriously, with the quite radical result that, far from being an encumbrance or indeed a wickedness, great love in old age is a means toward eternal life. If God is love, then *Amor* and *amor* can be equated not via metaphor alone, but also as a theological principle.

So, not only does Michelangelo end this poem with the rhyme of *ama forte* and *senza morte*—an unorthodox pairing within the conventions both of Christianity and of love lyric—but

he also presents this draft as a particularly handsome fair copy. Which takes us back to our hypothetical scene of this sheet's composition. The gorgeously executed sketch of the knee, which is maintained without verbal intrusion and kept in its proper horizontal orientation once the versifying has begun, the fair copy of the poem (however it may be superseded), and the legitimization of desire in the final lines can all be seen as part of the same state of consciousness. I have argued elsewhere for the powerful hold on Michelangelo's aesthetic and sexual imagination of certain body positions: indeed, the bended knee can carry us passionately through almost the entirety of his oeuvre.[47] It is also the case, as witnessed by so many of the most anthologized poems among his *Rime*, that artistic production and eros are profoundly linked in his imagination.[48] It may be, in other words, that the problem of the old man in love has to do with some actual person whom the seventy-year-old Michelangelo wished he didn't desire quite so much. But it is even more likely that it is about the question whether his artistic talent—defined, as ever, by renderings of the body—can (as it were) still get it up. As he inscribes the recto of fol. 88, then, Michelangelo looks back a few years at a supreme exercise of his talent and looks forward to its validation and its ultimate reward.

What is to be said, then, of the verso, which is the recto's opposite in every way? Here, too, there are sketches relating to the *Last Judgment*, one of a crouching figure holding a gridiron, the other, harder to read, apparently of an upward soaring body as seen from behind. But unlike the knee on the recto, these are small, barely (though masterfully) sketched, arrayed in rather random positions on the sheet, and—most important—covered by the later verse drafts in a manner that looks almost deliberate. And though the majority of the markings on the sheet, including the drawings, are disposed in the same horizontal orientation as the recto, other writings begin in the conventional upper left hand corner of the vertical sheet and continue across the presumed fold that symmetrically divided the recto.

If the recto was some sort of monument to at least a provisional sense of achievement, the verso places us rather in the thick of process. There are something like eight separate verbal fragments on this sheet, appearing in what look to be four or five distinct varieties of Michelangelo's handwriting. Clearly, he returned to this verso, not only some years after executing the *Last Judgment* drawings but also at repeated intervals once it was given over to the drafting of verses. About half of the material on the page works over the same madrigal —"Amor, se tu se' dio"—that appeared in fair copy on the recto. Versions of lines 5–10 and 9–10 are written on the sheet in its vertical orientation, and in similar handwriting but separated by the fold, whereas versions of lines 10–15 and 11–17 are written, in not so similar handwriting, in quite precise parallel position at the bottom of the horizontal orientation, also divided by the hypothetical fold.[49] The draft of lines 5–10 on the verso is corrected, or at least provided with an alternative immediately below, but with a space corresponding to a fold in the paper. The longer drafts, essentially two possible endings for a poem of differing lengths, are in left-right symmetry, with the paper turned horizontal, indeed with the longer version composed in smaller handwriting so that it can occupy more or less the same amount of space as the shorter version; here, too, the fold in the paper could enable the two versions to be either opened for comparison or sealed off from each other.

"Amor, se tu se' dio" predominates on both sides of the page, but the drafts of the poem on the verso make it clear that the original composition on this side consisted of drafts for other poems, a fact that renders it even more difficult to trace a linear sequence by which the madrigal could be said to have been created. Indeed, even though the parallel sets of verses that provide alternative endings are, like the fair copy on the recto, in horizontal orientation, they require a 180-degree turning of the page in order to be right side up. There is, in short,

no escaping a sense that Michelangelo turned his page over and around in many directions juggling many poetic thoughts in the process.

One set of these materials ends up straddling the two sides of the page, possibly as the first piece of writing on the verso and certainly as the last piece of writing on the recto. At the primary upper-left position of the verso in its vertical orientation, Michelangelo has written:

> Pur pietà l'alma spera
> ch'estinta prie sarie tuo beltà in culla,
> ch'i' fussi dal ciel cosa e date nulla.
>
> Nonetheless, the soul hopes that your beauty
> might have been extinguished from birth,
> rather than that I have been something heavenly and you nothing.[50]

These are followed by a sizeable space before he composes a six-line draft from "Amor, se tu se' dio." On the recto, beneath the fair copy of that same madrigal, he has drawn a horizontal bar and produced what is clearly another draft of similar purpose:

> Pur amor g[i]usto spera,
> che più che 'l ciel potria tuo parto e culla
> a esser da llu' cosa e date nulla.
>
> So love hopes righteously that your birth and origins could do more than heaven, to be made something by it and nothing by you.

The enigma of these lines is only somewhat clarified by assigning them, as Girardi has done, to the draft material for another madrigal, "Gli sguardi che tu strazi," built on yet another conceit of exchange: the looks that you grant others are stolen from me.

But this pair of triplets pursues a logic quite expunged in the final version of the poem, whereby the beloved's indifference to the speaker threatens him with nonexistence and, by the same logic of exchange, he wishes to visit that fate upon the beloved in return. In fact, it is just as important to note the independence of these lines as their relationship to drafts of "Gli sguardi che tu strazi." In both their appearances on fol. 88, they are separated from the rest of the writing. The horizontal line on the recto marks the division point between completed work and fragment, while the space on the verso (the only bit of open territory on that side of the page, and containing no underdrawing) must signal either some unrealized plan for continuation or, more likely, a need to segregate one poetic expression from another. In a metaphorical constellation of traded identities—where in every one of these poems the managing of that metaphor occasions Michelangelo's most insistent revision—the slide from *culla* to *nulla* ("cradle" to "nothingness") will perhaps inevitably break through the limits of the poem for which it was provisionally composed.

The other primary text on the verso, located in the upper-left corner of the sheet in its horizontal orientation, consists in sketches for yet another madrigal, "Mentre i begli occhi giri" (G255),[51] which follows its own complex career through multiple autograph drafts. Once again, the metaphorics have to do with exchange. In its final form, which appears in hasty but fair copy on another sheet in the codex (fol. 30v), this is a seventeen-line poem that takes the conceit of mutual reflection between the eyes of lovers who are of incongruous and unequal status, the speaker being old and ugly, while his beloved is young and beautiful.

Mentre i begli occhi giri,
donna, ver' me da presso,
tanto veggio me stesso
in lor, quante ne' mie te stessa miri.
Dagli anni e da' martiri
qual io son, quegli a me rendono in tutto,
e ' mie lor te più che lucente stella.

Ben par che 'l ciel s'adiri
che 'n sì begli occhi i' mi veggia sì brutto,
e ne' mie brutti ti veggia sì bella;
né men crudele e fella
dentro è ragion, c'al core
per lor mi passi, e quella
de' tuo mi serri fore.
Perché 'l tuo gran valore
d'ogni men grado accresce suo durezza,
c'amor vuol pari stato e giovanezza.

When you turn your beautiful eyes to me from nearby, lady, I see myself as clearly in your eyes as you do yourself in gazing into mine. Your eyes reflect me back to myself just as I am, marked by the years and by my sufferings, while mine to them reflect you, more brilliant than any star. It seems indeed to anger heaven that I who am so ugly should be seen in eyes so beautiful, and you who are so beautiful be seen in my ugly eyes; and what is done within is no less cruel and sad, for while through my eyes you pass to my heart, you within yours shut me out. This happens because your great virtue always increases in hardness when faced by what is inferior: for love requires equality of condition and youth.

The drafts on fol. 88v, probably the earliest among the three autograph sheets we have, go only as far as the questions surrounding the optics itself. Michelangelo begins with the opening line, which will remain unchanged in all versions, producing it in large cursive script. In similar handwriting, though smaller, and in what must be presumed to be one sitting, he then struggles with the question of who sees what, with interposed alternatives including "in lor più di me stesso" ("in them more than myself "), "in me non più me stesso" ("in me no longer myself "), "mi veggio" ("I see myself "), and the crossed out line, "ond'io più m'innamoro" ("whence I fall more in love"). Below, but in the same handwriting, is another pair of alternatives: "quel tanto in me ch'i' veggio e miro loro" ("that much I see in me and I gaze on them") and "in me lor tanto quant'i' veggio loro" ("they in me see so much as I see in them"). Not only is Michelangelo moving the words themselves around like so many mirror images; he is also continuing to operate in the realm of multiple intersecting identities, which was at the core, and problematic center, of "Amor, se tu se' dio." The interchange between the speaker and Amor has now shifted to the space between the speaker and the beloved.

But this is a relationship that is as spatial as it is conceptual. Below the twelve lines that represent a probable first effort at "Mentre i begli occhi giri," he later inscribes another version of what must be lines 3–6:

dentro da llor più desso
qual ch'i' son ueggio, e più se più onoro.

Se poi mi sguardi o miri,
ciascun vede se stesso.

In them from nearby
What I am I see, and the more I see [in you], the more I honor.
If then you glance or gaze at me,
each one sees himself.

Directly below, he composes one of the alternative endings for "Amor, se tu se' dio," not in a handwriting that resembles anything from the other drafts of that poem but rather one that seems continuous with the lines from "Mentre i begli occhi giri" above. Perhaps it is no surprise that here, in addressing Amor, he introduces a particularly direct version of the identity exchange: "se più vechio amo, più t'assomiglio" ("the older I am when I love, the more I resemble you"). Michelangelo is continuing to meditate on the problem of likeness, and the verses that will be ultimately assigned to different poems seem to exist in the same sort of mirror space as is delineated by their own metaphors.

One final excursion into this same mirror space. "Mentre i begli occhi giri" appears in what is probably a later, and certainly less corrected, draft on another sheet in the Vatican codex, which reveals such a special relation to fol. 88 that Girardi has asserted—without hard evidence, so far as I can see—that they were once a single sheet of paper. Fol. 93 (Figures 7-25, 7-26)[52] is the only other sheet that Michelangelo used in a predominantly horizontal orientation; and, in addition to "Mentre i begli occhi giri" on the verso, the two madrigal fragments on the recto ("Perché l'età ne 'nvola" [G268] and "Or d'un fier ghiaccio, or d'un ardente foco" [G269]),[53] one beginning in the vertical upper left, the other in the horizontal, both seem to be laboring with the problem of eyesight and reflection. In the one case, the speaker declares:

L'alma, che teme e cola
quel che l'occhio non vede,
come da cosa perigliosa e vaga,
dal tuo bel volta, donna, m'allontana.

The soul, which fears and reverences what the eye cannot see, makes me keep my distance from your beautiful face, lady, as from something dangerous yet alluring.

The other poem describes the experience of old age as one in which:

l'avenir nel passato
specchio con trista e dolorosa speme.

The future reflected in the past with sad and painful hope.

With no other drafts of either of these rather fragmentary poems, it is difficult to guess at their ultimate destinations. Placed in conjunction with all the poems on fol. 88, however, it seems as though this is a page on which the faculty of the reflecting eye is being submitted to the bleak consciousness of approaching death.

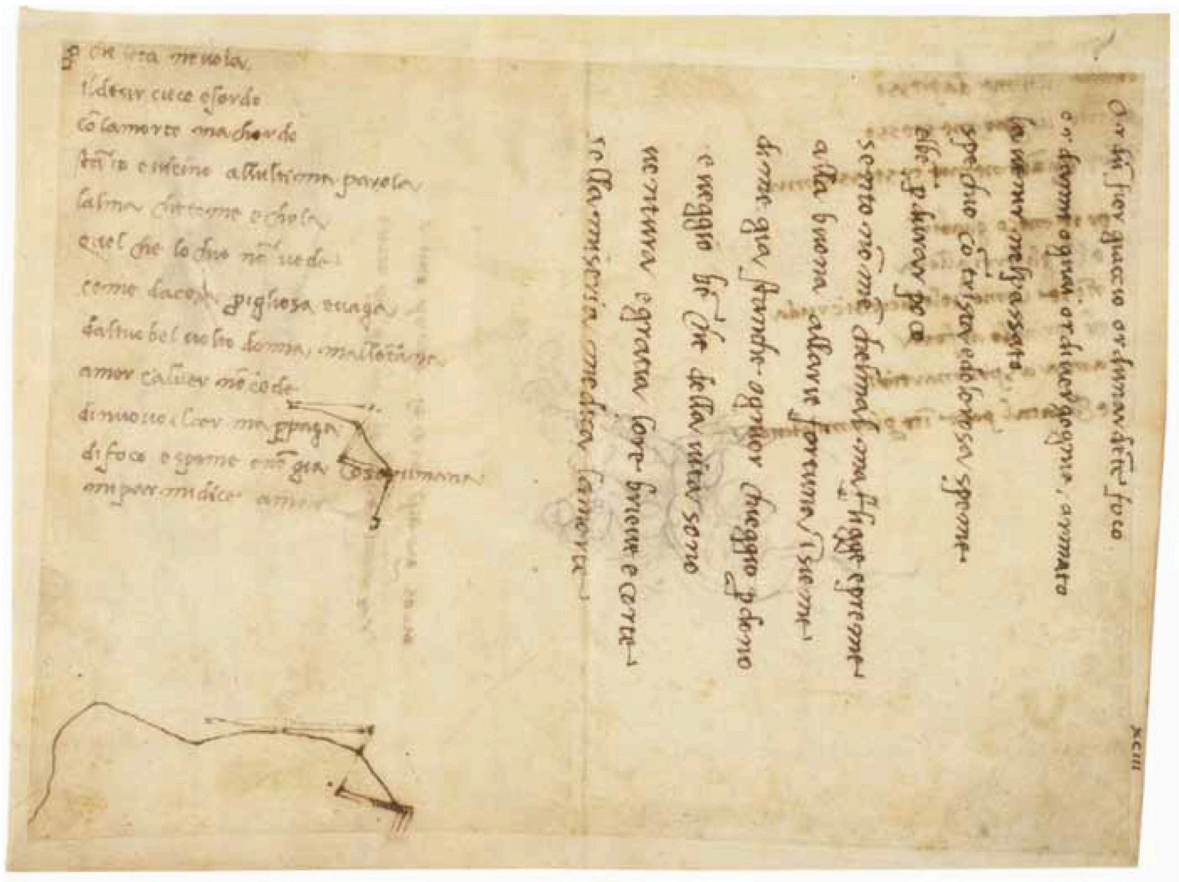
Except that, once again, there is another side to the story—not, in this case, recto vs. verso but left half vs. right half. Across the fold from the draft of "Mentre i begli occhi giri," there is another drawing. The subject is none other than a knee. Quite different, to be sure,

from the knee on fol. 88r: it is rendered straight on and with the suggestion of the lower leg rather than of the joint between the back of the knee and the upper leg, and it is generally assigned to Christ in the *Last Judgment* rather than to St. Lawrence. But as a piece of abstracted perfection drawn from the human body and a miniature exercise in lines and shadows, it appears very much a part of the same artistic effort as the knee on fol. 88.

On the same half-sheet as this, Michelangelo has composed a brief unrhymed fragment:

> Tu mi da' di quel c'ognor t'avanza,
> e vuo' da me le cose che non sono.
>
> You give me only what you already have left over, and ask from me what I do not have. (G270)

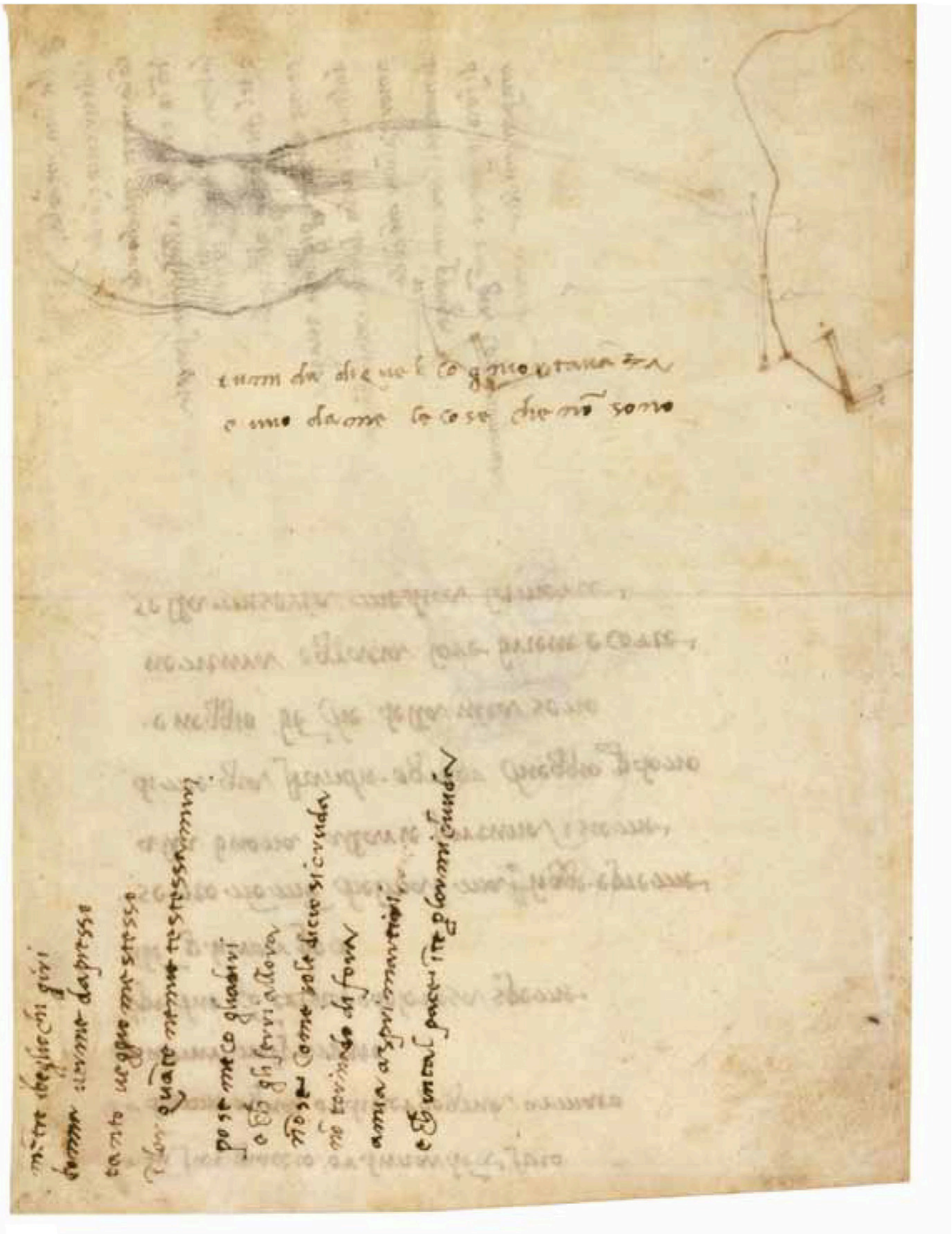
On fol. 88, he left the drawing side of the sheet blank when he came to write verses on the other half. Here, however, the sheet has been turned to the vertical so that the words can be written precisely in parallel to the drawing. Perhaps here alone of all the instances in the Vatican codex, we can see Michelangelo's writing in the 1540s as a direct response to his drawing from the 1530s.



7-25. Michelangelo, Vat. lat. 3211, fol. 93r (*Corpus* 353r). Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City

Why does he feel that he is suffering from such unreasonable demands? I would suggest that the answer places us in a diametrically opposite position to the triumphant success of love and art implied in the poetic draft next to the knee on fol. 88. In this case, the divinity—Amor, God—may continue to be generous with artistic inspiration, but the persistent demand

for some inward spiritual grace can somehow not be met by Michelangelo. The balance breaks down: to contemplate the glorious results of his artistic genius distances him from immortality, rather than bringing him closer. What these sheets record, then, is the life of an artist who on some occasions, to be sure, vigorously overwrites his own earlier artistic sketches with a confessional fervor about erotic and sacred love: indeed, on fol. 88v it looks as though he may have chosen the space deliberately so that the draft of lines from "Amor, se tu se' dio" would obliterate the previous drawing. And yet here, faced with one of his most beautiful, most corporeal, drawings, he cannot commit this act of verse-as-vandalism; rather he remains stuck in the paradox of a godlike creativity that cannot bring him closer to God. We find, staring back at us from the page, the beautiful artistic production of a sad old man burdened with sugar, mules, and candles he didn't ask for and doesn't really need, his sublime creative powers in the end just more gifts—these, from God—that he does not know how to repay.



7-26. Michelangelo, Vat. lat. 3211, fol. 93v (*Corpus* 353v). Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City

8
DRAWING THE LINE

For us, however, there is yet another special interest in considering para-praxes, chance actions and symptomatic actions in the light of this last analogy [to dreams]. If we compare them to the products of the psychoneuroses, to neurotic symptoms, two frequently repeated statements—namely, that the borderline between the normal and the abnormal in nervous matters is a fluid one, and that we are all a little neurotic—acquire meaning and support.

—Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*[1]

Never let a day go by without drawing a line.

—Proverb developed from the diligent artistic practice of the painter Apelles, as recorded in Pliny's *Natural History*[2]

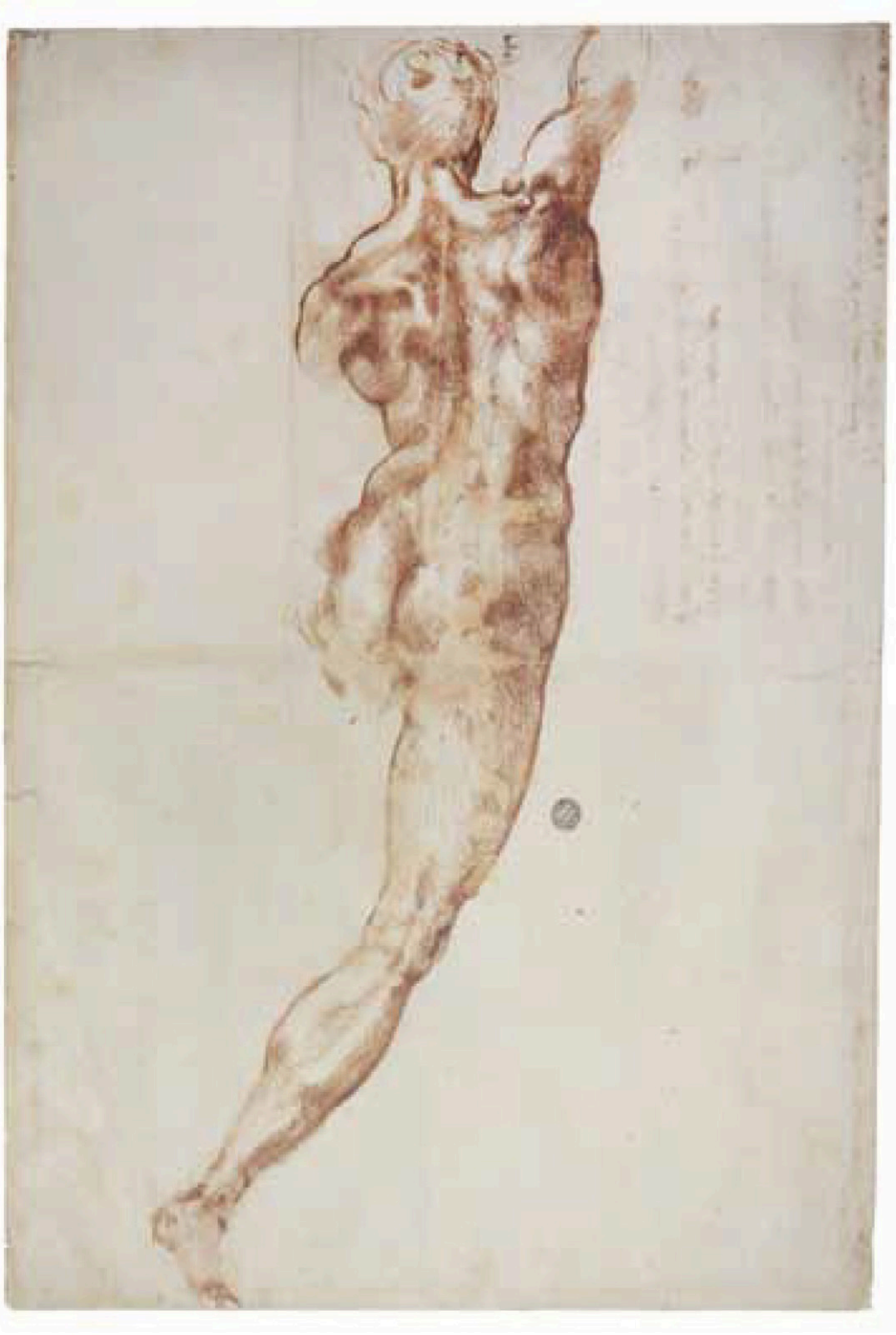
When this book began—not in Chapter One but in my mind—it was to be an exploration of the ways in which one great Renaissance artist, gifted in both visual and verbal media, undertook all the challenges of their parallel and contrasting implications in the close proximity afforded by single sheets of paper. The many pages on which Michelangelo left both graphic and textual imprint represented, I thought, a material archive that could offer a special sort of viewpoint on the interaction of words and images in sixteenth-century culture. In some respects, this proved to be true. When we see the young artist play with rebuses, or both sketch and name "David," or, alternatively, when we consider his later poetic drafts composed in spaces parallel to his drawings, we can at the very least refresh our memories as to the ways in which Renaissance artists gave multimedia expression to their artistic inspirations. Such pages, in other words, stand as a sort of living testimony to "as a picture, so a poem . . . " or "painting is mute poetry, poetry a speaking picture."

Yet such a line of inquiry, however worthy, did not in the end tell the whole story. Indeed, it emerged that the relationship between the artist's words and his pictures tends to follow the coordinated logic of these oft-repeated cross-media formulations only when he wishes to express himself in modes that are purposefully naïve or even parodic. One might even hazard to say that for Michelangelo *ut pictura poesis* was something of a joke. Quite by contrast, the majority of the works we have considered in these pages display their divergent inscriptions in relationships that appear too accidental, disjointed, or incongruous to submit even to the most nuanced version of *explication de texte* designed to make unified sense out of their multiplicity. In the opening chapter, I questioned one particular scholarly pathway through Michelangelo's sketch paper, which focuses on the final product, utilizing both visual sketchwork and verbal notation as a set of vectors pointing to finished (or, more often, *un*finished) work. I suggested that my arguments would rather attend to these sheets of paper as objects in themselves and that this book would seek out new ways of reading appropriate to the accident and spontaneity that characterized the archive. Thereupon I

launched into several chapters that performed such readings. Still, it seems only fair by way of conclusion to reflect on the core of assumptions and approaches that underlie the project.

If the reference point for a drawing like the muscular nude figure we considered in Chapter Two (Figure 8-1) is *not* the *Battle of Cascina*, with which it has been linked, and if in many other cases I declare such final targets to be either unrecoverable or never to have existed at all (because the artist was just improvising with no thought of an end product), then the alternative reference point can only be Michelangelo himself. But what does "Michelangelo himself " mean? Over the last half century, we have been wisely instructed to loosen the proprietary identifications that bind works of art to the names printed on their title pages or scripted in their lower right hand corners and to be more aware that cultures as a whole, histories of intertextuality, and the operations of language or of vision may be as foundational as the sovereign will of the named creator. Yet more significant—and this is where "the Death of the Author" meets "the Intentional Fallacy"[3] —we have learned to construe personal agency as operating in such ambiguous ways that a whole set of suppositions concerning artists' purposes (as intuited from their biographies) and their fulfillment in finished work has needed rethinking.

In the face of these quite legitimate questionings, I have nonetheless found myself dedicated simultaneously to honoring the complex theoretical problematics of Life-and-Work *and* to finding a way in which the artist himself can be brought back as a legitimate object of study. In many respects, it is the case of Michelangelo in particular that launches me onto this paradoxical territory. We have had many occasions in these pages to rehearse the extraordinary quantity of contemporary documentation that surrounds him. With some five hundred of his personal letters, hundreds of *ricordi* in his handwriting and almost as many first-person poems, two biographies written by his close associates, a not inconsiderable number of extant contracts, numerous transcriptions (as usual, not necessarily reliable) of his conversation, and at least a thousand letters to him or documents in which he is mentioned,[4] he is, I would venture to say, the most extensively archived early modern European who was not a king, pope, or saint.



8-1. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 49r. Casa Buonarroti 73F. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

This is not just about what documents get produced, it is about what gets preserved. The fact that we possess this huge treasure trove is not an accident. First of all, he was one of the most famous people in Europe, and so any encounter with him, in person or on paper, was likely to be memorialized. Second—and this is less obvious but perhaps more significant—he was an artist, living at a moment when the notion of the unique godlike hand of the Master was itself experiencing a Renaissance. (Indeed, he is partly responsible for that Renaissance.) As a consequence, every form of his production, even when it contained no pictorial work, took on some of that aura of uniqueness and presence that has been so critical a factor in the reception of art ever since. Furthermore, if, in one direction, he was able to take on the

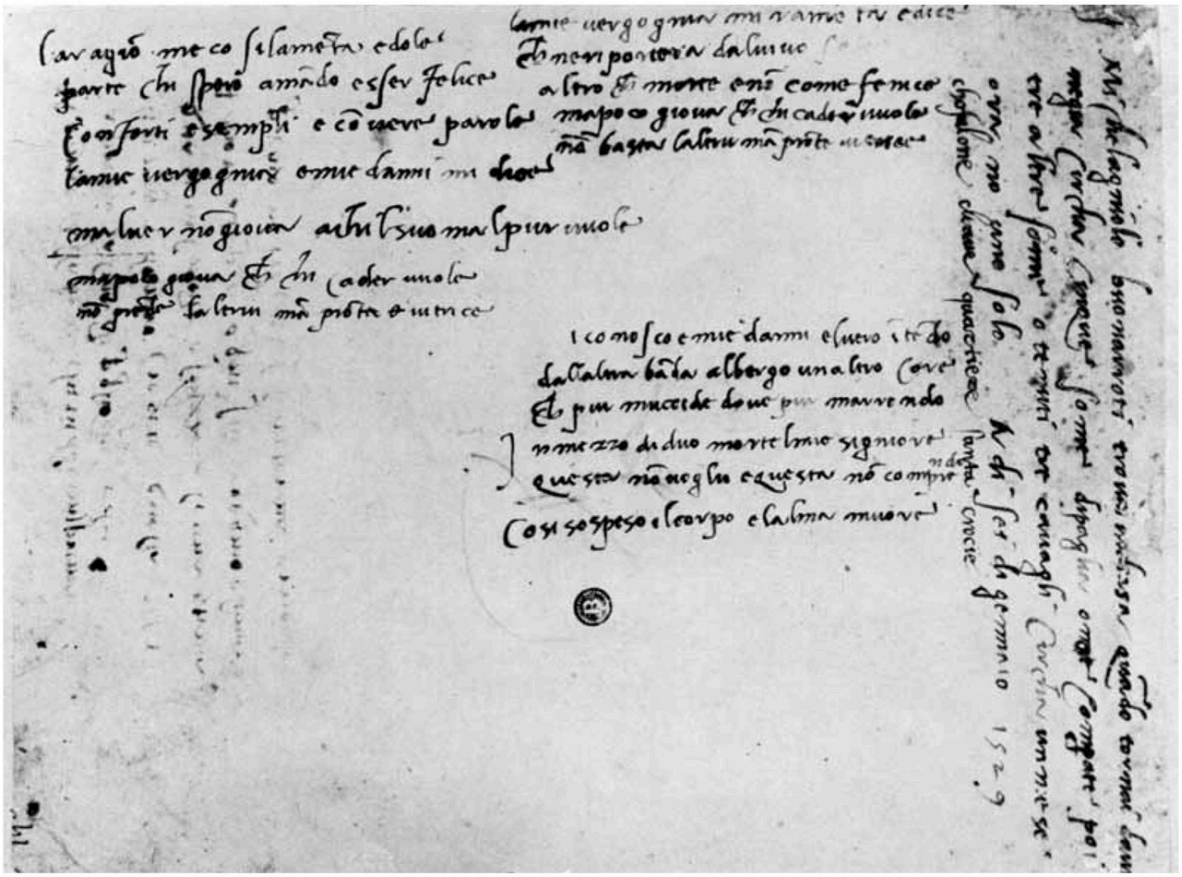
mantle of divinity because he was a visual artist who could form human beings in the likeness of God, in another direction he was the inheritor of a specifically literary form of star power, from a lineage that would include Virgil, who defined the career of the poet; Dante, who was given (or gave himself) the unique privilege of experiencing hell, purgatory, and heaven while still alive; and Petrarch, who made himself famous for being famous.[5]

In the end, though, it is the very sheets of paper that have constituted the central material of this book that provide justification for the analytic mode that I have adopted. Michelangelo became world famous, it is true. But renown alone was not responsible for the kind of grand selfhood that he performed: after all, many of the most richly introspective documents we have considered here were produced before he had become anything like a household name. The fact is that, from almost the earliest moments we can trace, Michelangelo was fixated on himself and was quite conscious of his work as auto-referential. He possessed, moreover, a kind of megalomania that not only caused him to see the external world as a projection of himself but also inspired his contemporaries to partake of that vision. And so I take it as possible to whittle away at the methodological boundaries between biography and oeuvre. In effect, I take permission from Vasari (among others) to consider the life itself as a work of art, with the caveat that the "life of the artist" is not so much a narrative constructed from many sources and then given a status of reality against which the artistic production can be made to perform its imaginative work; rather, particularly in the case of Michelangelo, that the life is best embodied as a sheaf of papers.

It seems then that owing to its focus on a particular subset of the archive, the *ut pictura poesis* book has become a psycho-biography. But what kind of interior reality do I ascribe to some two hundred autograph pages that happen to contain sketchwork and text in a wide variety of relation and non-relation, and on what sort of intellectual basis have I been seizing the authority to interpret them? I should say at once that I came to this matter with no *a priori*, that I simply set about reading the artist's inscriptions in the ways that they themselves seemed to demand. But, now, reflecting on my practice, it strikes me that, without the least dogmatic presupposition on my part (or so I hope), it is Freud's pioneering work at the beginning of the twentieth century that provided a model. In other words, all these sheets of paper, with their motley and aleatoric mixtures of personal and professional, of practical notations and intimate *cris de coeur*, turn out to represent something like Michelangelo's waking dreams, or, to put it another way, the psychopathologies of his everyday life.[6]

It should be pointed out at once that my espousal of these terminologies is methodological, not medical: my Freud is the theorist of interpretation, not the psychiatric diagnostician. When we look at a page of Michelangelo's autograph such as the heavily trafficked Archivio Buonarroti sheet (Figure 8-2), whose verso contains one drawing, three separate segments of poetry (plus one more on the recto), and a carefully written memo, dated 1529, about transactions involving horses and hay,[7] we cannot, by any standard set of procedures, put these pieces together. But it is just as much the case that each of them by itself proves difficult to integrate elsewhere. The sketch (barely perceptible on the page) is said to represent a *Leda*, which locates it inside an unresolvable scholarly debate about the artist's relation to ancient images and their influence on his statue of *Night* in the Medici Tombs.[8] The memo points to a set of routine business dealings whose aggregate is necessarily beneath history's radar. And, though the verse has been published as two self-contained works (G43, G44), its placement on the page leaves uncertain the question of how many distinct poetic undertakings were being attempted here. All of which suggests that, however miscellaneous the inscriptions on this sheet, their most authentic place of conjunction

is the page itself. No one can answer with certainty how each of these markings translates beyond this sheet; but it is undeniable that, at some moment or moments and in some order or other, Michelangelo wrote a memo, turned the leaf around or over, sketched, and versified on top of a sketch—and that he did all of this in one spot.



8-2. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 207bis. Archivio Buonarroti XIII 150. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

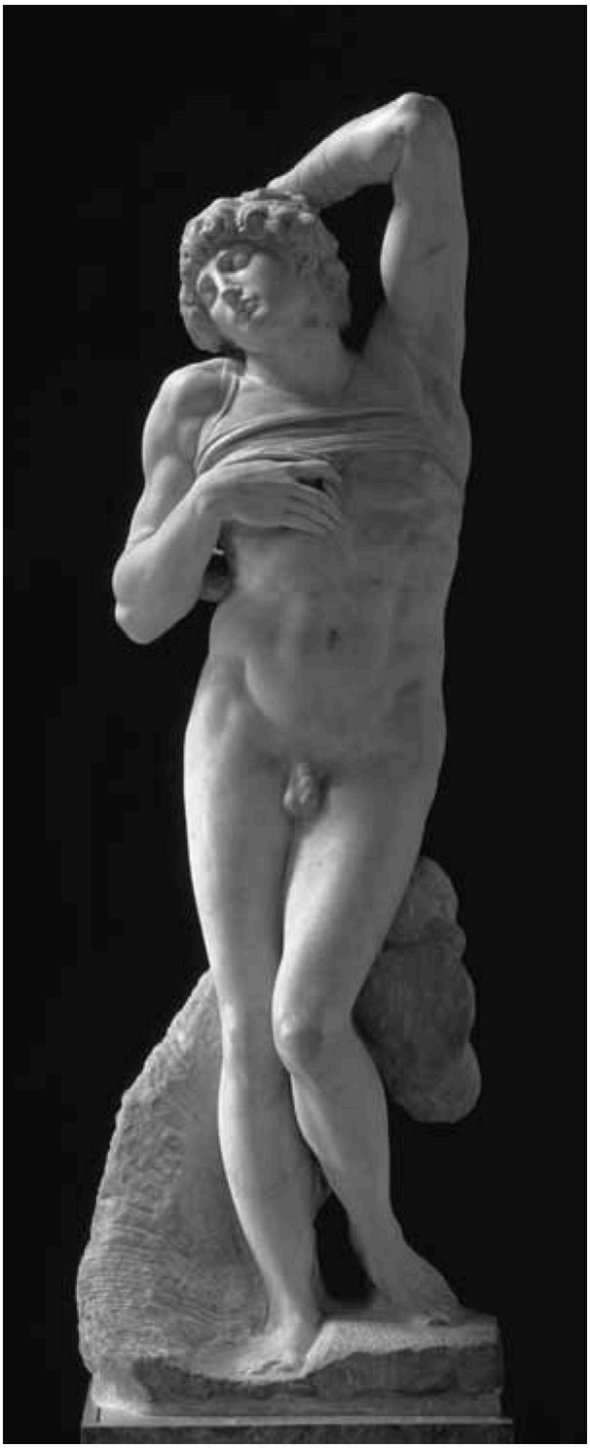
"Michelangelo himself," then, turns out to consist of two distinct fields of inquiry, each of them enigmatic and fragmentary in a different way: the inward space of his creative process and the outward space of his multitasking page. I have already, at least implicitly, enlisted Freud's help by suggesting in the opening chapter that this was to be a book about some early modern version of Michelangelo's unconscious. What *The Interpretation of Dreams* does for us is to postulate a psychic unit that is made up of seemingly incongruous components that nevertheless represent some underlying coherence, however unexpected or unintended; and *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* affords us a set of praxes whereby acts are performed independently of conscious intention. When we have considered the relations, for instance, among the various sketching efforts apparently aimed at the *St. Matthew* and the *Battle of Cascina*, along with the scraps of sacred and poetic text on a single sheet (see Figures 5-21, 5-22), or among the drawings of *putti* and the combination of Petrarch in Latin and the artist's own anguished voice in the vernacular on another sheet (see Figures 6-21, 6-22), or among the letter to Vasari, the sonnet about the pain of receiving gifts, and the tiny drawings of the Laurentian Library staircase on yet another sheet (see Figures 7-18, 7-19), we have attempted to do what Freud does with dreams. We have, in other words, sought to locate a kind of coherence not among these inscriptions in themselves—as though this page were some sort of organic utterance—but rather between each of these shreds of expression and some aspect of

the artist's life and work that is observable beyond this individual sheet. And that combinative process can be made to point toward larger conclusions. We have in effect reproduced a Freudian hypothesis whereby mental life itself is characterized by one sort of free association and therefore should, in response, be analyzed by an analogous form of free association.

If I resist the temptation to hypothesize exact parallels between a plethora of Freudian categories—condensation, displacement, wish-fulfillment, dream work, etc.—and the case of the artistic genius who engages in the almost compulsive covering of sheets of paper with whatever pops out of his head and into his hand, it is only so as to concentrate on some matters of comparison that are perhaps more immediately salient. The first has to do with repression. For Freud, the operation by which reality is made to swerve into dreams, errors, slips of the tongue, etc., is based not merely on pleasurable free play but on the necessity of encountering and yet containing that which conscious minds may not wish to face. What this unequal combination of exposure and concealment recalls to us, when we shift our attention to Michelangelo and his sketch paper, is, first of all, the particular dialectic of public and private that characterizes the whole archive on which this book is based. The matter has already been discussed in Chapter Six, but it bears repeating that a whole set of conflicting signals surround the production, preservation, and dissemination of these pages. In one sense, they might be said to be for the artist's eyes alone; in another sense, they were objects of selective, sometimes secret, distribution; in a third sense, many of them look like scrap paper of interest to no one; in a fourth sense, many of them (including the scrappiest) were clearly preserved—and observed—through many decades of the artist's life.

The notion of repression becomes more than a merely intriguing parallel when we attend to the very considerable discourse that surrounds the idea of the artist destroying his own work. The full story of Michelangelo in this regard—too long to be told here—would involve his tendency to leave works unfinished, his awe in the face of ancient sculpture that was itself fragmentary, and the whole question of his intention as regards works like the Louvre *Slaves* (Figures 8-3, 8-4), which, to modern eyes, seem to assert some inchoate condition of artistic process not as an accident of their making but as a fundamental part of their communicative force.[9] Let us, however, limit ourselves to a highly apposite passage in Vasari. The biographer has already offered the sort of explanation for the *non finito* that puts one in mind of the passage from Pliny quoted back in our first chapter about the ways in which artists' works that have been left incomplete at their death reveal a deeper sense of their artistic intentions than finished works. The Medici Madonna (Figure 8-5), Vasari says, "was left rough and showing the marks of the gradine, yet with all its imperfections there may be recognized in it the full perfection of the work."[10] Later, he goes on in this vein to reflect on Michelangelo's entire career:

> He had imagination of such a kind, and so perfect, and the things conceived by him in idea were such, that often, through not being able to express with the hands conceptions so terrible and grand, he abandoned his works—nay, destroyed many of them; and I know that a little before he died he burned a great number of designs, sketches, and cartoons made with his own hand, to the end that no one might see the labours endured by him and his methods of trying his genius, and that he might appear less than perfect.[11]



8-3. Michelangelo, *Dying Slave*, made for the Tomb of Pope Julius II. Louvre, Paris

8-4. Michelangelo, *Rebellious Slave*, made for the tomb of Pope Julius II. Louvre, Paris

There is no question of accident here—that is, of works remaining unfinished because the artist has gone on to do other things or because he has died. This is an account of deliberate abandonment or active destruction, the motivation for which depends on a particular map of the creative process whereby there exists a realm of the imaginative faculty in which the perfect idea may reside, and from which material realizations represent a debasement as regards that perfection. This is in particular true when they involve such gross material actions as laying chisel to stone. Hence, Vasari's colorfully mythological account of this degrading

process: "quando e' voleva cavar Minerva della testa di Giove, ci bisognava il martello di Vulcano" ("when he wished to extract Minerva from the head of Jupiter, he needed the hammer of Vulcan").[12]

But the burning of the drawings—which, it should be noted, may as likely have been a biographical topos as a factual datum—is not quite the same thing as, say, the smashing of the Florentine *Pietà* (see Figure 5-9), which Vasari recounts in detail. To destroy the statue (according to this logic) is to obliterate a final work that fails to meet the artist's internal conception. To destroy the drawings that precede a final work is to annihilate a vision of the process that took him from his internal conception to the finished object. There is, after all, an official story promulgated by Michelangelo himself about the operations of his creative process, enshrined in (among other places) the most famous passage of his poetry, the opening lines of the very sonnet that Benedetto Varchi expounded at the Florentine Academy:

> Non ha l'ottimo artista alcun concetto
> c'un marmo solo in sé non circonscriva
> col suo superchio, e solo a quello arriva
> la man che ubbidisce all'intelletto.
>
> The greatest artist does not have any concept which a single piece of marble does not itself contain within its excess, though only a hand that obeys the intellect can discover it.[13]

8-5. Michelangelo, Medici Madonna. Medici Chapels, New Sacristy, San Lorenzo, Florence

It is an orthodox brand of aesthetic Neoplatonism, which places great weight on terms like *concetto* and *intelletto* and which declares artistic creation to be immanent within the material universe, at the same time as it is permitted only to those of special genius to evoke that glorious immanence. The drawings, however, could blow the cover on this story. Not only do they expose the precise sequence of steps that might have taken Michelangelo from the Neoplatonic idea to the completed work; even more gravely, they run the risk of revealing that there may not *be* any Neoplatonic idea. It is possible, in other words, that genius is all process and nothing but process. Worse yet, they may reveal that the *concetto* isn't inside the stone at

all but inside the artist, and it gets released via a practice, at once plodding and narcissistic, of covering sheets of paper with substantiating reflections of his own imagination, which would be invisible to him were it not re-presented externally by his compulsive business of rendering himself on paper. "Ogni dipintore dipinge sè":[14] this is the diagnosis by which Michelangelo's drawings can be seen as a site for repression.

The other aspect of these pages that qualifies them in the analytic realm of the dream is the all too obvious fact that they are pictures. I can hardly do justice here to the myriad of ways, and not only in his early work, whereby Freud understands dreams as visual—even painterly—phenomena. Sometimes he uses pictoriality by way of analogy, so as to help us understand how a certain sort of contradiction and simultaneity can be indulged in during sleep but not in waking life. Sometimes particular images, like Raphael's *Parnassus* or Francis Galton's morphed versions of family photographs, take on a more substantial explanatory power in his argument, connecting the dream with categories like family or history. At other times, it seems as though he is looking for ways to understand dreams as literally and phenomenologically a set of mental pictures.[15] Our interest here, though, has largely confined itself to pictures that come with words; and, from the first chapter, I have privileged that composite sort of production, as though neither medium in isolation would reach so deeply into Michelangelo or support the sort of interior analysis that this book aims to perform.

To the extent that Freud helps us to understand how this might be the case, it is because the relation in his thinking between discourse and dream turns out to be far more than heuristic. In a densely argued passage concerned with the means of representation, Freud establishes how dreams shortcircuit certain crucial features of language:

> When the whole mass of these dream-thoughts is brought under the pressure of the dream-work, and its elements are turned about, broken into fragments and jammed together—almost like pack ice—the question arises of what happens to the logical connections which have hitherto formed its framework. What representation do dreams provide for "if," "because," "just as," "although," "either—or," and all the other conjunctions without which we cannot understand sentences or speeches?[16]

His answer consists in flipping us over from words to pictures. Dreams, he says, "take into account in a general way the connection which undeniably exists between all the portions of the dream-thoughts by combining the whole material into a single situation or event. They reproduce *logical connection* by *simultaneity in time* [emphasis original]."[17] His terms are drawn from arguments that go back to Lessing's *Laocoön* concerning the challenges that the painter faces in representing text, the need to choose a *punctum temporis* that both condenses and embodies the fullness of the material's verbal origins.[18] And Freud goes on to make this link explicit. He has already given us a quick history, in which primitive art started by hanging textual labels on its representations until it discovered the "laws of expression by which it is governed." Now he goes on to say, "Here [dreams] are acting like the painter . . . ." Not surprisingly, if the dream-work turns the discursive into the pictorial, the analytic process must retrace that movement in the opposite direction: "the restoration of the connections which the dream-work has destroyed is a task which has to be performed by the interpretive process."

Between Freud and Michelangelo we may observe in its entirety the gap that separates metaphoric expressions like *ut pictura poesis* from actual artistic production in one or both media. Freud may wish to understand mental life as pictorial in any number of different ways, but it is clear that for him the visual dream is framed by entities—whether the preanalytic

state of the patient or the cure afforded by analysis itself—that he hopes to nail down with words. In this regard, it is doubtless no accident that in his essay on "The Moses of Michelangelo" Freud confesses to a form of art appreciation that, with whatever admitted limitations, mostly contents itself with translating visual experience into language.[19] Michelangelo, in his work and (doubtless) in his interior life, can find no such secure equilibrium. As a consequence, his practice reproduces all the ways in which the verbal and the visual reflect, supplement, fulfill, and betray each other, but he is not able to bring them to rest. That is why Dante and Petrarch play such a role on sheets of paper otherwise consigned to draftsmanship, and that is why his own poetic efforts are so often characterized by spatial composition.

For all of which, I offer two final examples that seek to illustrate the actual moment of instability between picture and word, each of them thus rendered fragmentary. We have already considered the sheet (see Figure 5-11) containing a riot of overlapping sketches and, in a bit of open space, a quatrain from Petrarch's *Rime* 271 that is broken off and misremembered via conflation with a different sonnet. Petrarch's subject was the management of his grief over the death of Laura; Michelangelo, who is clearly struggling with some form of mourning and melancholy himself, quotes (or misquotes) as follows:

> L'ardente nodo ov'io fu' d'ora in ora,
> contando anni ventuno ardendo preso,
> morte disciolse; ne già mai tal peso
> provai, ne credo c'uom . . .
>
> The fiery knot I was caught in, hour by hour,
> burning for a count of twenty-one years,
> death has untied; I never felt such a weight,
> nor do I believe that man . . .

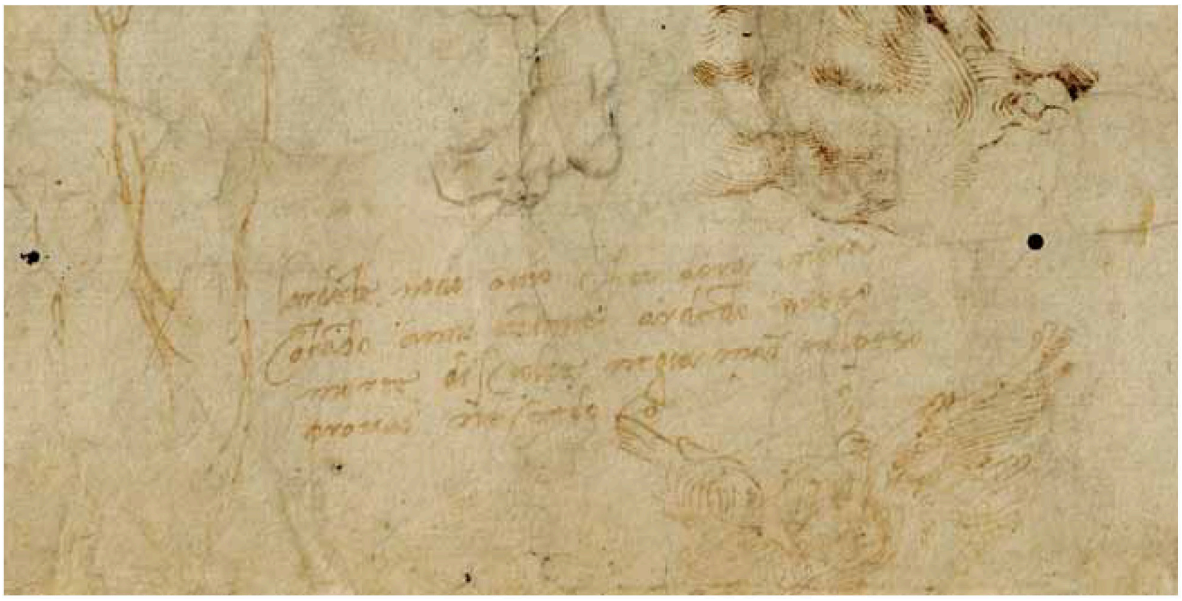
Michelangelo has stopped writing (or his memory has failed him—and, after all, it is a poem about memory) precisely where Petrarch has made a rather surprising move. He reviews the twenty-one year-long bond of loving Laura that death has now dissolved, and he declares that he has never experienced such a heavy weight; nor, he says, does he believe that . . . . At which point, a careful reader, noticing *disciolse* ("untied") and *peso* ("weight"), might find it quite logical that the statement of belief with which the stanza actually ends is the proposition that man cannot die of grief, or, as it appears in Petrarch's original, "né credo ch'uom di dolor mora." In other words, the dissolving of the bond and the lifting of the weight point toward recovery from the sorrow both of loving and losing Laura—a recovery that Petrarch will pursue (precisely in the poem that Michelangelo mixes up with this one) in the direction of serene heavenly acceptance.

But another reader, faced with the three and a half lines of Petrarch's poem that precede Michelangelo's break, particularly in relation to the hundreds of agonizing lines that precede *them*, may well expect the speaker to say that he *will* die of grief, a conclusion that is encouraged by the syntactic parallelism between the two *né* clauses, the first of which speaks to such Dantean suffering, leading us to suppose that the second will intensify rather than diminish this impression of pain. Michelangelo reveals himself as stuck at this crossroads of possibilities, which is actually a multiple crossroads: not only before the question of whether one can recover from grief but also whether the inability to die of grief should be understood as a good thing or a bad thing—whether, in short, such survival signifies, on the one hand,

emotional healing or, on the other, a hardening of the heart. Petrarch complicates that question with the equally ambiguous recourse to a second beloved, which leads him into the weird territory of suggesting that Laura's death was a piece of good fortune since it trained him to have an easier time with the death of her successor in his affections.

For Michelangelo, this is beside the point. He is presumably unable to pursue Petrarchan role-playing so far as to hypothesize a second (or even, at this point, a first) beloved, and, as we saw in Figure 5-21, he has his own special interest in scripting the word *dolor*. But here (Figure 8-6) he is able to move forward from this verbal rupture in a manner that Petrarch did not have at his disposal. As in many other cases, I hesitate to claim a precise temporal or causal relation between words and images (though here the ink does look quite similar); but, however these two sets of markings managed to find themselves in proximity, the interrupted Petrarch lines and the winged *amorino*/angel seem to converge on questions of death, love, and the hereafter. This is nothing like the kind of parodic equivalence characteristic of that other winged creature, the crow that pictorially concluded Michelangelo's street address (see Figure 3-11). But this disjunction between *poesis* and *pictura* reveals quite precisely that we are in a realm where words and pictures may stand at the ready as alternate means of expression but are not so handily capable of finishing each other's sentences.

As we have seen elsewhere, Michelangelo's own poetic composition is liable to occupy yet more heavily charged spaces. A couple of decades later in his career (though dates are rarely certain), when writing poetry begins to occupy him as much, or at any rate as intensely, as the making of visual art, he works on a set of terza rima verses (Figure 8-7) that reveal close indebtedness to the Petrarch sonnet that he had stopped in the middle of inscribing amidst the drawings.[20] He has at this time had the real experience of the death of a loved one (perhaps his brother Buonarroto[21]), and now he ventures on precisely the territory that lay beyond his reach when he inscribed *Rime* 271: "Troppo dolor vuol pur ch'i' campi e viva" (G45; "excess of pain makes me still survive and live"), he writes, and from that point his language turns yet more Petrarchan:



8-6. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 20v. Louvre 688, detail

Crudel pietate e spietate mercede
me lasciò vivo, e te da me disciolse,

rompendo, e non mancando nostra fede
e la memoria a me non sol me tolse . . .

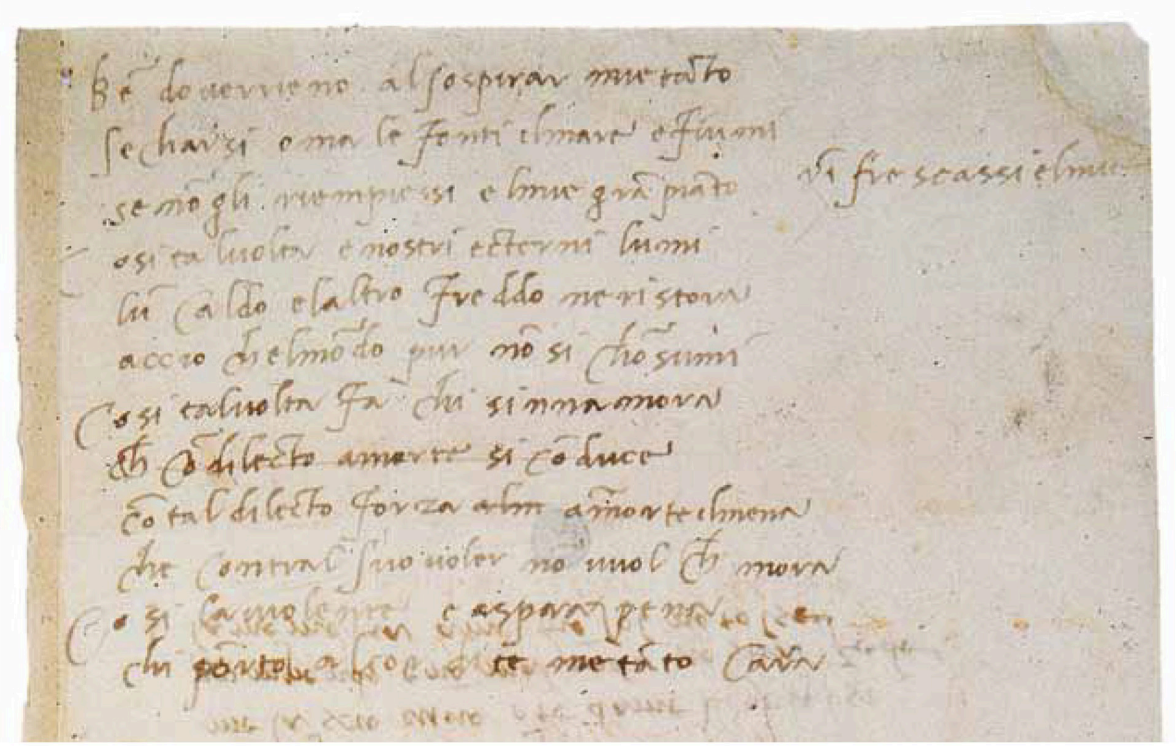
Cruel pity and pitiless mercy left me here alive, and separated you from me, interrupting though not destroying our faithful love, and not only did they not take away from me the memory . . .

Once again, the ellipsis: even though he seems to be composing something like a fair copy, one more time he breaks off in the middle of a heavily charged syntactic unit. There is no other version of this segment of text, so we cannot guess what else *crudel pietate e spietate mercede* might do to him besides erase his memory. Indeed, by creating the double oxymoronic subject, Michelangelo has further complicated the question that was left hanging in his Petrarch transcription as to whether this extra consequence of grief was going to be a positive one or a negative one.

That we are here in some territory of deep inward uncertainty is confirmed by the fact that this isn't the only ellipsis on this sheet. We have been considering the side that is designated as the recto, but previously on the verso (Figure 8-8) he has made a much rougher attempt at the same poem. It begins, as does the later version, with an extravagant pathetic fallacy about the way his sighs would have dried up the world's bodies of water were it not that his tears have filled them up again with liquid. But then he gets bogged down with a conceit about the individual who falls in love—*chi s'innamora*—and therefore meets death with pleasure, or perhaps does *not* meet death with pleasure. These cancelled possibilities are followed by something much clearer, presumably designed to replace them:

Ed ò ueramente assopita omai tanto
esser sono che ormai le fonti e fiumi
et meglio rinfrescassi colmi pianto
Così talhora mi stimi eterni limi
Hor caldo e hor freddo mi sforza
a certo che in modo più non si sumi
Et similmente el cor che sia amorza
quando del sopradetto ardor troppo le rende
la mente degli chi il bagna e lo morza
Amorte el duol chi bramo e cerco rede
Et con tanto auenir che me mi lasci
morir et chi di lei ha no offende
Onde la nauicella mia no passi
Come uorrei auedersi a quella riua
che le corpo per altrempo di qua lassi
Troppo dolor uuol pur chi empi e riua
qualche hora altri ne loco andando uede
che dopo gli altri assai de lui ne arriua
Vuol pietate esser tanta mercede
me lassato uuo ete dame di star lse
no mpendo e no mancando no stia fede
La mémoria amor no sol ne tolse

8-7. Michelangelo, *Corpus* 225r. Archivio Buonarroti XIII fol. 169. Casa Buonarroti, Florence



8-8. Michelangelo, draft of G45. Archivio Buonarroti XIII fol. 169, detail. Casa Buonarroti, Florence

Così la violente e aspra pena
ch'i' porto al cordite m'è tanto cara . . .

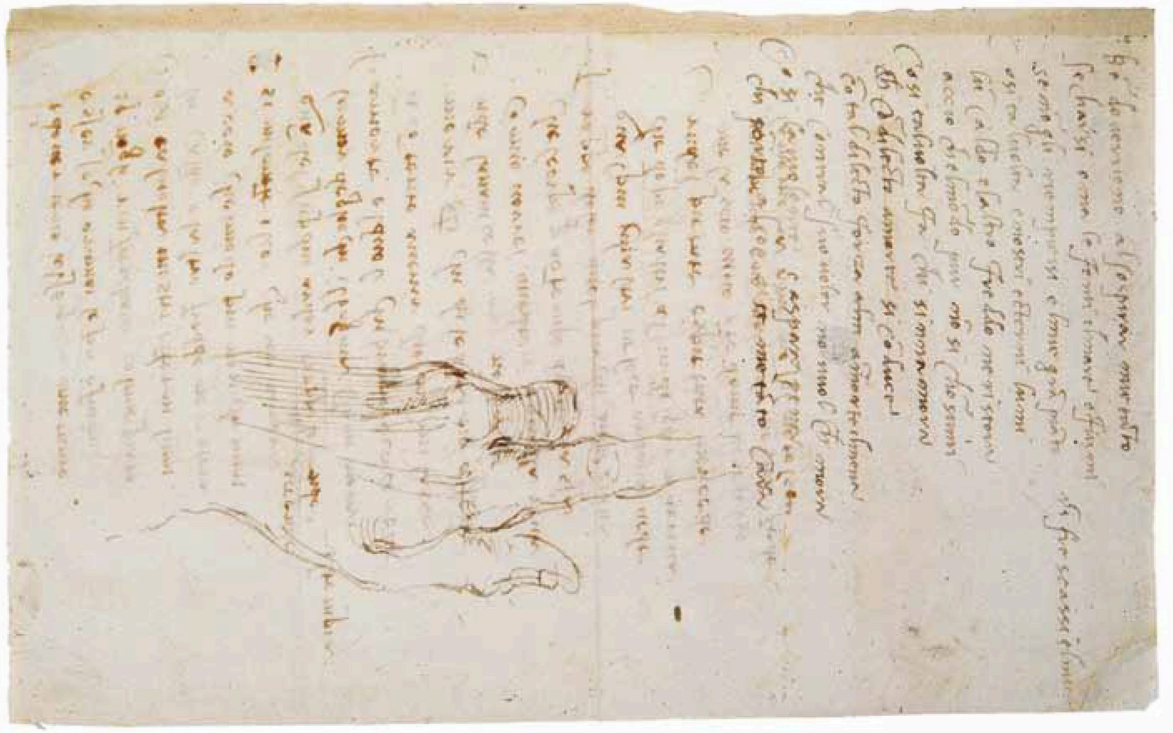
So the violent and bitter pain
that I carry in my heart on your account is to me so dear . . .

At which point, yet again, the writing breaks off. By this time, that should not be a surprise. It is a clear and straightforward expression of what has evidently been a great anguish for Michelangelo; namely, the possibility that he actually enjoys suffering—that, in other words, he might indeed benefit from the death of someone he loves, as Petrarch had curiously proposed in his own situation.

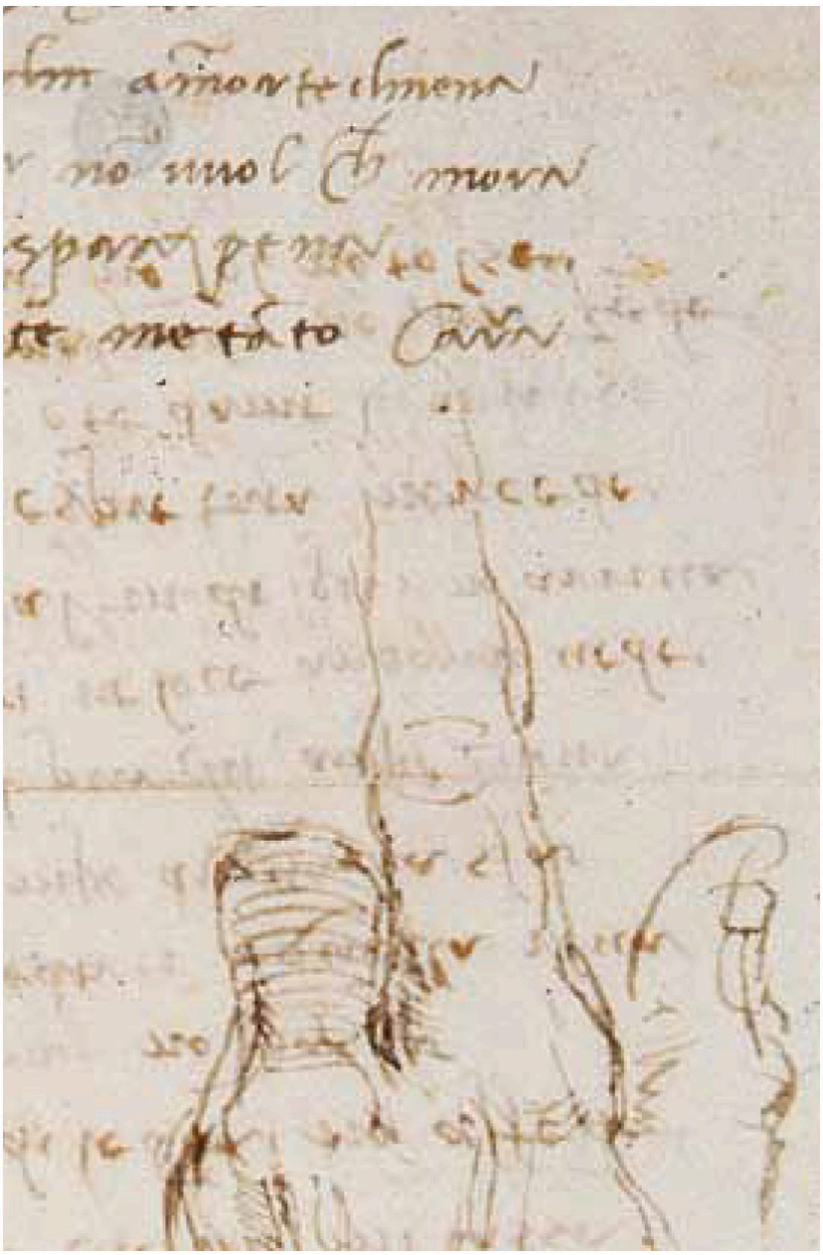
But what is as interesting as the glimpse into Michelangelo's unspoken mental state is the break itself. It is difficult, in the case of the Petrarch poem amidst the sketches on Figure 8-5 to be sure about the relation between the writing and the image-making. But here the nature of that connection is clearer (Figure 8-9). Instead of finishing the thought that *tanto cara* introduces—instead of revealing *quanto cara*—Michelangelo rotates the paper ninety degrees, distancing himself from the experience of writing and reading; then, with, it appears, the same pen and the same ink, and, of course, the same right hand, he composes a portrait of his own left hand, which he has laid down, sharply bent at the wrist, on the other half of the partially empty page. The index finger, slightly truncated by the final word, points to that troublesome love of suffering. Michelangelo has recreated the sign of the manicule, the picture of the pointing finger that had for centuries, in both manuscript and print, given special

emphasis to the written word—the kind of emphasis that mere words themselves could not provide.[22]

In this case, the image arises in the silence, blankets the space, and delivers what the text cannot bring itself to deliver: a self-portrait which, but for the necessary imperfection of being the left rather than the right hand, would stand as pictorial metonymy for that inward capacity which makes both images and words. But it remains in mathematical terms an irrational ratio: there is no handy mechanism of equivalence here, no *ut* that can map the transit between *poesis* and *pictura*, as between *Macel de´* . . . and the sketch of the crow, or even between the fictively drawn statue of a Madonna and the auto-referential burlesque that mocks any ambition to produce such a final work (see Figure 5-30). For us, the pointing finger (Figure 8-10) stands as a reminder of the hieroglyph: in Michelangelo's long life—so much of it lived vividly on paper—Symonds's ideographic metaphor speaks to the inextricability of text and image, to the unfulfillable dream of an expressive system that might be picture and word at once, and to the ultimate challenges of deciphering the interior spaces of inspiration where they are conjoined.



8-9. Michelagelo, Corpus 225v. Archivio Buonarroti XIII fol. 169, complete sheet. Casa Buonarroti, Florence



8-10. Detail of Figure 8-9.

NOTES

NOTE ON NOTES

Frequently cited works will be referred to in shorthand. For all references in the notes that are accompanied by an asterisk (*), the complete bibliographical citation can be found on the following list.

Barocchi, *Michelangelo*: Paola Barocchi, *Michelangelo e la sua scuola, i disegni di Casa Buonarroti e degli Uffizi*, 3 vols. (Florence 1962–64).
Barocchi, *Vita*: Giorgio Vasari, *La Vita di Michelangelo nelle redazioni del 1550 e del 1568*, P. Barocchi, ed., 4 vols. (Milan 1962).
Cambon: Glauco Cambon, *Michelangelo's Poetry: Fury of Form* (Princeton, NJ 1985).
Carteggio: *Il Carteggio di Michelangelo*, G. Poggi, P. Barocchi, and R. Ristori, eds. 5 vols. (Florence 1967).
Chapman: Hugo Chapman, *Michelangelo Drawings: Closer to the Master* (New Haven, CT 2005).
Clements, *Poetry*: Robert J. Clements, *The Poetry of Michelangelo* (New York 1966).
Condivi-H/E: Ascanio Condivi, *Vita di Michelangelo*, M. Hirst and C. Elam, eds. (Florence 1998).
Condivi-W: Ascanio Condivi, *The Life of Michelangelo*, A. S. Wohl, trans., H. Wohl, ed. (Baton Rouge, LA 1976).
Corpus (followed by a catalogue number): Charles deTolnay, *Corpus dei disegni di Michelangelo*, 4 vols. (Novara 1975–80).
Costanza: *Costanza ed evoluzione nella scrittura di Michelangelo*, L. B. Ciulich, ed., exh. cat. (Florence 1989).
deTolnay, Archivio: Charles deTolnay, "Die Handzeichnungen Michelangelos im Archivio Buonarroti," *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* 5 (1928): 377–476.
deTolnay, *Medici*: Charles deTolnay, *Michelangelo: The Medici Chapel* (Princeton, NJ 1948).
deTolnay, Vaticanus: "Die Handzeichnungen im Codex Vaticanus," *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 48 (1927): 157–205.
deTolnay, *Youth*: Charles deTolnay, *The Youth of Michelangelo* (Princeton, NJ 1947).
Dussler: Luitpold Dussler, *Die Zeichnungen des Michelangelo* (Berlin 1959).
Giannotti: Donato Giannotti, *Dialogi de' giorni che Dante consumò nel cercare l'Inferno e 'l Purgatorio*, D. Redig de Campos, ed. (Florence 1939).
Girardi: Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Rime*, E. N. Girardi, ed. (Bari 1960).
Goffen, *Rivals*: Rona Goffen, *Renaissance Rivals: Michelangelo, Leonardo, Raphael, Titian* (New Haven, CT 2002).
Grafia: *Michelangelo: Grafia e biografia*, L. B. Ciulich and P. Ragionieri, eds. (Florence, 2004).
Hartt, *Drawings*: Frederick Hartt, *Michelangelo Drawings* (New York 1970).
Hirst, *Drawings*: Michael Hirst, *Michelangelo and His Drawings* (New Haven, CT 1988).
Joannides, *Ashmolean*: Paul Joannides, *The Drawings of Michelangelo and His Followers in the Ashmolean Museum* (Cambridge 2007).
Joannides, *Michel-Ange*: Paul Joannides, *Dessins italiens du Musée du Louvre, Michel-Ange: élèves et copistes* (Paris 2003).
Perrig: Alexander Perrig, *Michelangelo Drawings: The Science of Attribution* (New Haven, CT 1991).
Petrarch, *Canzoniere*: Francesco Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, M. Santagata, ed. (Milan 1996).
Petrarch, Durling: *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, R. M. Durling, trans. (Cambridge, MA 1976).
Ramsden: Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Letters*, E. H. Ramsden, ed., 2 vols. (Stanford, CA 1963).
Residori: Michelangelo, *Rime*, M. Residori, ed. (Milan 1998).
Ricordi: *I Ricordi di Michelangelo*, L. B. Ciulich and P. Barocchi, eds. (Florence 1970).
Rosand: David Rosand, *Drawing Acts: Studies in Graphic Expression and Representation* (Cambridge 2002).
Ryan, *Introduction*: Christopher Ryan, *The Poetry of Michelangelo: An Introduction* (Madison, NJ 1998).
Ryan, Translation: *Michelangelo: The Poems*, C. Ryan, trans. (London 1996).
Saslow: James Saslow, *The Poetry of Michelangelo* (New Haven, CT 1991).
Symonds: J. A. Symonds, *The Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti* (New York 2004 reprint).
Vasari-deV: Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, Gaston du C. de Vere, trans., intro. D. Ekserdjian (New York 1996).

Vasari-M: *Le opere di Giorgio Vasari con nuove annotazione e commenti di Gaetano Milanesi*, 9 vols. (Florence 1878–85).
Wallace, "Drawings": William E. Wallace, "Drawings from the *Fabbrica* of San Lorenzo during the Tenure of Michelangelo" in *Michelangelo Drawings*, C. H. Smyth, ed. (Washington 1992), 117–41.
Wallace, "Instruction": William Wallace, "Instruction and Originality in Michelangelo's Drawings," in *The Craft of Art: Originality and Industry in the Italian Renaissance and Baroque Workshop*, A. Ladis and C. Wood, eds. (Athens, GA 1995), 113–33.
Wilde, *British*: Johannes Wilde, *Italian Drawings in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum: Michelangelo and His Studio* (London 1953).

1 HIEROGLYPHS OF THE MIND

1. *Symonds, 134.
2. Kenneth Clark, *Leonardo da Vinci: An Account of His Development as an Artist*, revised edition (Baltimore 1967), 71.
3. For a general introduction, see Peter Ucko and T. C. Champion, eds., *The Wisdom of Egypt: Changing Visions through the Ages* (London 2003). For the early modern period in particular, see E. H. Gombrich, *Symbolic Images: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* (London 1972), and Brian A. Curran, *The Egyptian Renaissance: The Afterlife of Ancient Egypt in Early Modern Italy* (Chicago 2007).
4. Freud's fullest discussion of the unconscious is in a paper of that name written in 1915. See Standard Edition (London 1957), 14.161–215, but the concept is implicit throughout the analyses in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) and comes directly into the discussion at 5.540–621. On the two artists, see especially "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood," 11.59–138, and "The *Moses* of Michelangelo," 13.209–38. The discussion of the hieroglyph appears at 11.88–89.
5. *Natural History*, Loeb Classical Library, H. Rackham, trans. (Cambridge, MA 1984), 35.145.
6. For Hume, see "Of Tragedy" in *Selected Essays*, S. Copley and A. Edgar, eds. (Oxford 1998), 126–32; for Diderot, see "Observations sur la sculpture et sur Bouchardon" in *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris 1875), 13.43: "J'admire l'édifice entier; la ruine me fait frissonner; mon coeur est ému, mon imagination a plus de jeu. C'est comme la statue que la main défaillante de l'artiste a laissée imparfaite; que n'y vois-je pas?" from which he goes on to quote the Pliny passage.
7. On Leonardo as a writer in general, see *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, J. P. Richter, ed., C. Pedretti, comm. (Oxford 1977). On the question of left-handedness, see the valuable survey in *Rosand, 63 and 357n4, and the elegant essay of Carmen Bambach, "Leonardo, Left-Handed Draftsman and Writer" in *Leonardo da Vinci, Master Draftsman*, exh. cat. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 2003). For the commonsensical conclusion about his motives in producing mirror writing, see A. Richard Turner, *Inventing Leonardo* (New York 1992), 13–14. A more occult view is offered by Ivor V. Hart, *The Mechanical Investigations of Leonardo da Vinci* (Berkeley, CA 1963), 8–10.
8. I draw the numbers from standard editions of the various written works. The *Rime*, edited by Enzo Noé Girardi, consists of 302 poems plus 41 fragments. As regards the letters, Girardi's edition (*Lettere di Michelangelo Buonarotti* [Arezzo 1976]) consists of 498 items. The **Ricordi* catalogues over three hundred items, each of which consists of many separate *ricordi*. So far as table talk is concerned, the most notable instances are *Giannotti, and Francisco de Hollanda, *Diálogos em Roma*, both of which will be discussed below. Vasari further reports on a dialogue he plans to publish based on Michelangelo's "begli ragionamenti dell'arte ed industriosi" (*Vasari-M 7.228, *Vasari-deV 2.704), revealed during walks through Rome. In a similar fashion, but on a somewhat different topic, Condivi speaks of Michelangelo's response to what he considered the feeble work of Dürer, which, given the Master's age, he does not expect to be able to write himself but is conveying to his biographer (see *Condivi-H/E 57;*Condivi-W 99). Neither the Vasari dialogue nor the Condivi material saw the light of day.
9. Ghiberti's *Commentari* and Cellini's *Autobiography* are, of course, well known. For Raphael's *Sonnetti*, see *Gli Scritti*, E. Camesasca, ed. (Milan 1993). On Bronzino, see the fine work of Deborah Parker, *Bronzino: Renaissance Painter as Poet* (Cambridge 2000).
10. On the funeral activities, see the facsimile edition of the *Esequie del divino Michelagnolo Buonarroti* prepared by Rudolf and Margot Wittkower (London 1964). Regarding the diminution of importance accorded to Michelangelo's status as poet in his memorialization, see *Ryan, *Introduction*, 4.
11. Vasari reports that on his early flight to Bologna, Michelangelo ingratiated himself with Francesco Aldrovandi by reciting the works of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio in his Tuscan accent (*Vasari-M 7.147, *Vasari-deV 2.650). Later in the *Life*, he reports that Michelangelo "molto dilettato delle lezioni de' poeti volgari, e

particolarmente di Dante, che molto lo amirava ed imitava ne' concetti e nelle invenzioni; così 'l Petrarca" (*Vasari-M 7.274, *Vasari-deV 2.739). It should be noted that these *concetti* and *invenzioni* that he imitated out of Dante's work do not seem to refer to poetic efforts on Michelangelo's part, though Vasari goes on to mention the poetry. Condivi tells the same story about Bologna; his version of Michelangelo's literary tastes goes so far as to say "ha specialmente ammirato Dante . . . qual egli ha quasi tutto a mente, avenga che non men forse tenga del Petrarca" (*Condivi-H/E 61, *Condivi-W 103).

12. On the Del Riccio and Giannotti enterprise, see below, Chapter 7. For the dialogue, referred to above in note 8, see *Giannotti. For the anecdote about Leonardo and Michelangelo as readers of Dante, see the *Codice Magliabechiano*, C. Frey, ed. (Berlin 1892), 115. Varchi's lectures were published as *Due Lezzioni*; the text can be found online at http://www.bibliotecaitaliana.it/xtf/view?docId=bibit001495/bibit01495.xml; see also Leatrice Mendelsohn, *Benedetto Varchi's* Due lezzioni *and Cinquecento Art Theory* (Ann Arbor, MI 1981).
13. Varchi, *Lezzione nella quale si dispute della maggioranza delle arte e qual sia più nobile, la scultura o la pittura* in P. Barocchi, ed., *Trattati d'arte* (Bari 1960), 1.57, translation mine.
14. The Simonides maxim is quoted by Plutarch (*Moralia*, 346v) apropos of a distinction between the respective capacities of literary and historical narrative. Horace's famous dictum—as universally cited as it is ambiguous—appears at *Ars poetica*, line 361.
15. Socrates' somewhat tendentious analogy of poets to painters occupies most of Book X of the *Republic*. The argument in the *Phaedrus*, which compares writing to painting as part of a claim about the inferiority of the written to the spoken word, appears at 275d.
16. *De inventione*, 2.1.1–4.
17. *Institutio oratoria*, 2.13.8–10.
18. For Dante, see *Purgatorio*, 10.94–96; for Montaigne, see the "Avis au lecteur" at the beginning of the *Essais*; for Sidney, see *An Apology for Poetry*, Geoffrey Shepherd, ed. (London 1965), 101; for Bacon, see *The Advancement of Learning*, 1.4.3.
19. Alberti develops the expression *historia* in Book 2 of *De pictura*. Titian's use of the term *poesie* appears in a letter to Philip II, written in 1554; for the complete text, see Tiziano, *Le Lettere* (Cadore 1989), 171.
20. See, for instance, the elegant discussion devoted to the use of this phrase in André Chastel et al., *The Renaissance: Essays in Interpretation* (London 1982), 255–56; for Michelangelo's own use of the idea, see note below. On the literary side, it appears in places as distinct as Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* and the "Apology for Ariosto" by Sir John Harington (he of the poetic ode to a toilet), for which see Brian Vickers, *English Renaissance Literary Criticism* (Oxford 2003), 308.
21. Michelangelo's citation of Horace appears in the Third Dialogue (*Diálogos em Roma*, G. D. Folliero-Metz, ed. [Heidelberg 1998], 108–10); the praise of Michelangelo in relation to Virgil appears in the Second Dialogue (94).
22. See, for instance, *Leonardo on Painting*, Martin Kemp, ed. (New Haven, CT 1989), 20–34.
23. This is a subject of such deep and lasting scholarly interest—as well as importance to my own work—that it is impossible to enumerate all the relevant authorities. For one version of the bibliography, and my own thoughts on certain aspects of the subject, see "Making Pictures Speak: Italian Art, Elizabethan Literature, Modern Scholarship," *Renaissance Quarterly* 48 (1995): 326–51. My own forthcoming volume, *Mute Poetry Speaking Pictures*, will offer another perspective on these word-and-image questions. The classics in the field are Jean Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray* (Chicago 1958) and Rensselaer W. Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting* (New York 1940). To which one would add the complete works of such scholars as E. H. Gombrich, D. J. Gordon, Erwin Panofsky, Fritz Saxl, and Edgar Wind. Among more recent work in the field that I find particularly inspiring, see Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition* (Oxford 1971); Harry Berger, *Fictions of the Pose: Rembrandt Against the Italian Renaissance* (Stanford, CA 2000); Murray Krieger, *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (Baltimore 1992); and W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory* (Chicago 1994).
24. *Vasari-M 1.255–56, *Vasari-deV 1.55–56.
25. The standard works on emblems remain A. Henkel and A. Schöne, *Emblemata: Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart 1967), and W. S. Heckscher and K. Wirth, "Emblem, Emblembuch," in O. Schmitt, *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte* (Stuttgart, 1959), 5.85–228. Two interesting recent critical works on this subject are Elizabeth See Watson, *Achille Bocchi and the Emblem Book as Symbolic Form* (Cambridge 2004) and Peter M. Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem* (Toronto 1998).
26. See in particular the magisterial work of *Rosand, 1–111. For an earlier, and highly influential, analysis, see E. H. Gombrich, "Leonardo's Method for Working Out Compositions," in *Norm and Form: Studies in the Art of*

the Renaissance (London 1966), 58–63.

27. See *Rosand, Chapter 3.
28. See E. H. Gombrich, "The Grotesque Heads" in *The Heritage of Apelles* (London 1976), 57–75. See also the very interesting response by Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature* (Princeton, NJ 1982), 215–18.
29. See Martin Kemp, "'Ogni dipintore dipinge sè': A Neoplatonic Echo in Leonardo's Art Theory" in *Cultural Aspects of the Italian Renaissance: Essays in Honour of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, C. H. Clough, ed. (New York 1976), 311–23. Among Renaissance artists who made direct reference to this issue, see, for instance, Dürer's comments comparing artists to mothers who are excessively pleased with their own children (*The Literary Remains of Albrecht Dürer*, W. M. Conway, trans. [Cambridge 1889], 180), and the Vasari anecdote about Michelangelo's ironic praise for an unnamed artist in whose painting the best element was the ox: "Ogni pittore ritrae se medesimo bene" (*Vasari-M 7.280, *Vasari-deV 2.743).
30. *Trattato della pittura*, 44v. The translation is from *Treatise on Painting*, A. P. Mac-Mahon, trans. (Princeton, NJ 1956), 1.55–56: "Havendo il più volte considerato la causa di tal difetto mi pare che sia da giudicare che quella anima che reggie e governa sciascun corpo sì è quella che fail nostro giuditio inanti sia il proprio giuditio nostro. Adunque ella ha condotto tutta la figura del homo com'ella ha giudicato quello stare bene o col naso longo, o corto, or camuso e così li afermo la sua altezza e figura et e di tanta potentia questo tal giuditio ch'egli move le braccia al pittore et fagli replicare se medesimo parendo a essa anima che quello sia il vero modo di figurare l'homo, e chi non fa come lei faccia errore."
31. See Girolamo Savonarola, *Prediche sopra Ezechiele*, R. Ridolfi, ed. (Rome 1955), 1.337–52; also see Zöllner, cited in next note.
32. See, for instance, Marco Carpiceci, *Leonardo allo specchio: Ritratti e autoritratti*, exh. cat. (Brescia 1984), and, with a more sophisticated approach, Frank Zöllner, "'Ogni Dipintore Dipinge Sè': Leonardo da Vinci and Automimesis" in *Der Künstler über sich in seinem Werk*, M. Winner, ed. (Weinheim 1992): "His almost neurotic attitude towards 'automimesis' may tempt us to assume that Leonardo for personal as well as psychological reasons tried to avoid self-expression" (145).
33. On the repeated phrase, which has also attained widespread modern currency (probably inaccurately) as a reference to procrastination, see Martin Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci: The Marvelous Works of Nature and Man* (Cambridge, MA 1981), 87–88. Freud's discussion of the sheet referring to the death of Leonardo's father appears at Standard Edition, 11.119–22.
34. For two attempts at answering the most demanding questions about Leonardo in regard to word and image, both of them useful but neither of them definitive, see Jörg Bittner, *Zu Text und Bild bei Leonardo da Vinci* (Frankfurt-am-Main 2003), and Robert Zwijnenberg, *The Writings and Drawings of Leonardo da Vinci* (Cambridge 1999).
35. For the Windsor drawings, see Carlo Pedretti and Kenneth Clark, *The Drawings of Leonardo Da Vinci in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen at Windsor Castle* (London 1968). For the Codex Urbinas, see *Trattato della pittura*, above in note 30. For the Madrid codex, see *The Madrid Codices: National Library Madrid, Fascimile Edition of Codex Madrid I*, available online at http://digital.library.cornell.edu/k/kmoddl/toc_leonardo,html. For the Paris codex see *The Manuscripts of Leonardo da Vinci in the Institut de France*, A. Corbeau and N. deToni, eds., J. Venerella, trans. (Milan 1999).
36. In these pages, I do everything I can to bracket questions of attribution, largely by concentrating on sheets that have fairly widespread support, but also by accepting—indeed, at times embracing—the importance of the different hands in the Michelangelo studio that may well have intervened in the production of the pages under consideration. To the extent that one wishes to cite a sum total of extant autograph sheets, a need that arises only for the purposes of making general statistical claims, I have followed, as in other respects, Charles deTolnay's **Corpus dei disegni di Michelangelo*, which lists ca. 630 items. This massive and invaluable work in my opinion adopts a laudably catholic approach that entertains as possibly authentic any drawing that a notable range of past experts considered to be authentic. Such an approach allows the connoisseur to discuss the problems of attribution without a vested interest either in placing a high value on a work because it is the gem of a particular collection or in garnering publicity by de-attributing works that have gone previously unchallenged. I find it comforting as well that the deTolnay overall numbers are generally supported by Paul Joannides, the doyen of Michelangelo connoisseurs working at the present time (see *Joannides, *Ashmolean* 46). I would cite another highly creditable student of the drawings, Hugo Chapman, who concurs on this estimated total in his excellent catalogue-cum-book based on the superlative 2005 British Museum exhibition, (see *Chapman, 23–28.) For very different approaches, both of them in the slash-and-burn school of attribution, see *Perrig, and Thomas Pöpper's essay in Frank Zöllner, Christoph Thoenes, and Thomas Pöpper, *Michelangelo: The Complete Works* (Hong Kong 2007), 494–97.

37. Following deTolnay's proportions, approximately 137, or about 22 percent, of the drawings are architectural. For subtly reasoned arguments that look behind the surface issues about text and image on architectural drawings, see Cammy Brothers, *Michelangelo, Drawing, and the Invention of Architecture* (New Haven, CT 2008), 9–43, and Caroline Elam, "Funzione, tipo e ricezione dei disegni di architettura di Michelangelo" in *Michelangelo e il disegno di architettura*, C. Elam, ed. (Venice 2006), 43–73.
38. See below, Chapter 7, for a full discussion of one of these manuscripts.
39. I take this statistic from the very useful concordance in *Saslow, 537–38, which links the poems to the same sheets as the drawings.
40. The present volume would have never been possible without these efforts. See *Wilde, *British*, and *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*. Joannides has done the catalogue for the Ashmolean Museum (see *Joannides, *Ashmolean*), and he has produced an equally definitive catalogue for the Louvre (see *Joannides, *Michel-Ange*).
41. His Cat. 25 and 26 (see below Figures 5-18, 5-29, 5-30), for instance, contain writing on both recto and verso, in one case including over twenty lines of poetry; no mention is made of the texts in any of the entries. It should be noted, to deTolnay's credit (mostly), that when the words written on a drawing offer an art-historical payoff, as for instance in the case of architectural sketches or the diagrams of marble slabs, their texts are more likely to be transcribed.
42. This edition of the *Rime* (see *Girardi), while performing the Herculean task of offering a definitive edition of the poetic texts, not only relegates the adjacent drawings to a minor position but also chooses not to indicate the relevant placement on the page of the poetic revisions. For more on these matters, see Chapter 7 below.
43. For the text on 19035v, see Jean-Paul Richter, *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci* (London 1883), cat. 77; for 12631r, see Richter, cat. 823. The whole Windsor collection has been produced in facsimile with transcription and translation as *Corpus of the Anatomical Studies in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen at Windsor Castle*, K. D. Keele and C. Pedretti, eds. (London 1978–80).
44. Translated by the present author from *Scritti scelti di Leonardo da Vinci*, A. M. Brizio, ed. (Torino 1980), 514–15: "E tu, che vogli con parole dimonstrare la figura dell'omo con tutti li aspetti della sua membrificazione, removi date tale oppenione, perchè, quanto più minutamente descriverrai, tanto più confonderai la mente del lettore e più lo removerai dalla cognizione della cosa descritta. Adunque è necessario figurare e descrivere."
45. There is no more tantalizing enigma, both as regards Leonardo and the subsequent reception of Leonardo, than the question of his intentions as to the diffusion of these extremely varied manuscript exercises in words and pictures. Cutting across all their subject matters and in both their visual and verbal inscriptions, these pages steadily employ a rhetoric that points toward a projected audience, and yet there is little or no evidence that such a project ever really got under way. The exception—but it would be better to say the *seeming* exception—is the so-called *Trattato della pittura*, which came to be known as a treatise and enjoyed very wide circulation *qua* treatise at regular intervals after (and *only* after) Leonardo's death. Its status as such turns out, however, to be entirely after the fact, the consequence of a transcription of Leonardo's notes (from which we possess only scraps of original manuscript) and then of a complex telephone game of pan-European publication. On the general question of Leonardo's *Leben* and *Nachleben*, see Turner, *Inventing Leonardo*; on the particular fortunes of the *Trattato della pittura*, see Kate Trauman Steinitz, *Leonardo da Vinci's "Trattato della pittura," Treatise on Painting, a Bibliography of the Printed Editions, 1651–1956* (Copenhagen 1958), and the essays in Claire Farago, ed., *Re-Reading Leonardo: The Treatise on Painting across Europe, 1550–1900* (Aldershot, Eng. 2009).
46. See *Vasari-M 7.146 and *Vasari deV 2.649, making it clear at the very beginning of Michelangelo's career that, in addition to copying (or falsifying) other works of art, he was studying nature as well: "molte volte scorticando corpi morti, per studiare le cose di notomia, cominciò a dare perfezione al gran disegno ch'egli ebbe poi." Condivi, speaking of the later phases of Michelangelo's life, emphasizes his connection to the anatomist Realdo Colombo (*Condivi-H/E 57, *Condivi-W 99).
47. The works discussed here are classified by deTolnay as **Corpus* 114, 112, and 111. Michael Hirst, in *Michelangelo Draftsman*, exh. cat. (National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC 1988), briefly discusses the group of works and declares that the "drawings deserve more study" (68), which remains true. But see the illuminating entry on **Corpus* 112 by Paul Joannides in *Michelangelo and His Influence: Drawings from Windsor Castle*, exh. cat. (National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC 1997).
48. The lines constitute a draft evidently aimed toward material that will issue in two closely related eleven-line madrigals (classified by Girardi as 130 and 131—henceforth his numbering will be indicated by "G"). Michelangelo, presumably some time after writing the text on this drawing, sent the two works to Luigi del Riccio, with a quite typically self-effacing message regarding their quality and asking his friend to choose "quale vi pare il manco tristo" (**Carteggio* CMXC-VIII [4.144]), so that a friend of theirs could improve on it.

Both poems concern themselves with the dangers of a beautiful face. Only the first line written on the drawing remains in the versions sent to del Riccio. Translation is mine.

49. See especially Chapter 2 below.
50. For studies of this complicated history, see *deTolnay, *Medici*, *passim*, esp. 33–41. Among the valuable interpretive work on this project, see three essays reprinted in W. E. Wallace, ed., *Michelangelo: Selected Readings* (New York 1999): Frederick Hartt, "The Meaning of Michelangelo's Medici Chapel" (291–301); Creighton Gilbert, "Texts and Contexts of the Medici Chapel" (303–21); and L. D. Ettlinger, "The Liturgical Function of Michelangelo's Medici Chapel" (323–40).
51. In addition to the material in the **Corpus* (189r), see *Wilde, *British*, cat. 28, and *Dussler, cat. 153.
52. G13, though I have presented the text as it appears on the drawing. The translation in this case is from *Saslow.
53. **Corpus* 201r. See also *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 61, and *Dussler, 58.
54. G14, but the text copied from the drawing. The translation is from *Saslow.
55. See, for example, the discussion about days and nights at *Giannotti, 48.
56. The lines appear on Raphael's tomb in the Pantheon, and they are included, along with a poem by Castiglione, in Vasari's *Life* of Raphael (*Vasari-M 4.386). The translation is from *Lives of the Artists*, a selection translated by George Bull (Harmondsworth, Eng. 1987), 1.323.
57. See, for instance, Kenneth Gross, *The Dream of the Moving Statue* (Ithaca, NY 1993), and my own "'Living Sculptures': Ovid, Michelangelo, and *The Winter's Tale*," *ELH* 48 (1981): 639–67, and *Unearthing the Past: Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture* (New Haven, CT 1999), 210–31.
58. The poem is G247; see *Girardi for the textual variations. The original epigram ("La Notte che tu vedi in sì dolci atti | dormir, fu da un Angelo scolpita | in questo sasso, e, perchè dorme, ha vita: | destala, se nol credi, e parleratti") was widely circulated in manuscript. Both texts were already published in the first edition of Vasari's *Life of Michelangelo* (*Le Vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani*, L. Bellosi and A. Rossi, eds. [Turin 1986], 903; for an English translation of that edition, see Michelangelo, *Poems and Letters*, A. Mortimer, trans. [London 2007], 174), and included in *Giannotti, 45. Translations of Michelangelo's poems are from *Ryan, Translation, unless otherwise indicated.
59. The anecdote is related in a letter written by Niccolò Martelli in 1544. For the original text, see *deTolnay, *Medici*, 68.

2 ON THE SAME PAGE

1. On the history of paper, see the technological account in Dard Hunter, *Paper-making: The History and Technique of an Ancient Craft* (New York 1978), and the socio-historical accounts in the opening chapters of Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book*, D. Gerard, trans. (London 1976), as well as Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge 1983). From another geographical area, but highly relevant to the *longue durée* of the subject, is Jonathan Bloom, *Paper before Print: The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World* (New Haven, CT 2001).
2. On the general situation of paper in relation to artistic production, see the very useful pages in Francis Ames-Lewis, *Drawing in Early Renaissance Italy* (New Haven, CT 1981), 19–23, for instance: "In the fifteenth century, good quality paper cost about one-sixth the price of parchment: it was therefore much more expensive than was generally assumed. . . . The cheapness of paper compared with parchment was commented on by late fifteenth-century writers, but it was nonetheless still a commodity of significant cost to the artist" (22–23). See also the indispensable work of Carmen Bambach, "The Purchases of Cartoon Paper for Leonardo's *Battle of Anghiari* and Michelangelo's *Battle of Cascina*," *Villa I Tatti Studies* 8 (1999–2000): 105–33. The statistic of 1,500 extant sheets for Michelangelo is a rough calculation based on the number of manuscript sheets including drawings, poetry, and *ricordi*.
3. For a range of Michelangelo's scriptorial practice on paper, see two exhibition catalogues from the Casa Buonarroti: **Costanza* and **Grafia*. The grocery list page is **Corpus* 117, for which see below, Chapter 3. The drawings intended as finished art in themselves include such famous works as the *Bacchanale of Children* (**Corpus* 338r) and the *Dream of Human Life* (**Corpus* 333r). The defecating man is **Corpus* 316v.
4. The example of Vasari signals this process: in parallel to his compiling of the *Lives of the Artists*, he created a personal collection of their drawings, which he mentions frequently in the course of the *Lives* and which he bound in an elegantly decorated volume. See Otto Kurz, "Vasari's *Libro de' disegni*," *Old Master Drawings* 12 (1937): 1–15, 32–44, and Licia Ragghianti Collobi, *Il Libro de' disegni di Vasari*, 2 vols. (Florence 1974). For the collecting phenomenon in general, see Charles deTolnay, *History and Technique of Old Master Drawings* (New York 1943), 1–8, 76–86.

5. In addition to the entry in *_Corpus_ 15, see *Barocchi, _Michelangelo_, cat. 287; also see the valuable discussion in *_Grafia_, cat. 4. Both the latter entries transcribe all the texts.
6. Girardi catalogues "La voglia invoglia . . . " among the fragments as A2. In the excellent annotated volume edited by Matteo Residori (*Residori), it is characterized as relating to the Tuscan proverb, "Colla voglia cresce la doglia." "La morte è 'l fin . . . " is taken almost verbatim (minus the "'l") from the _Trionfo della morte_, 2.34.
7. For the Siena negotiations, see Harold R. Mancusi-Ungaro, Jr., _Michelangelo: The Bruges Madonna and the Piccolomini Altar_ (New Haven, CT 1971). On the place of this work at the beginning of Michelangelo's career as a draftsman, see the entry in *_Corpus_ 15, as well as *deTolnay, Archivio, 424, and *Dussler, cat. 27. On the prophetic nature of the young Michelangelo's interest in Petrarch's "renunciation of earthly values," see *Clements, _Poetry_, 319–20.
8. See the entry in *_Grafia_, cat. 4, which declares that the angry text on the recto was written "sotto la pressione di avvenimenti di grave importanza [nel 1508], tanto da rendere difficile la lettura e l'identificazione stessa della scrittura."
9. See, for instance, the discussion of *_Corpus_ 49 (Figures 2-14, 2-15, below); for another kind of long-term preservation, see the discussion in Chapter 7 of *_Corpus_ 490v (Figure 7-17).
10. The question of preservation, as regards pages containing drawings, writings, or both, is so fundamental to the establishment of an archive such as is discussed in this volume that it doubtless deserves more space than it is usually given (including here). As will be often reiterated in telling our story, contradictory narratives swirl around the question of Michelangelo's relation to his paper: on the one hand, there is the often recounted episode of his burning his drawings (part of a deathbed recantation topos, which neither confirms nor contradicts its veracity); on the other hand, the demonstrable fact that he held on to stacks of his paper long enough to engage in multiple reworkings of both visual and verbal production, not to mention the fact of the Casa Buonarroti archive itself, which includes a notable proportion (though not as large as we would like) of early efforts whose chain of provenance necessarily began with the artist's own retentiveness over many decades. As regards the survival of drawings, see the very useful account in *Hirst, _Drawings_, 16–21; also helpful, as regards the history of collecting these works, is the chapter on Sammlungen in *Dussler, 37–41. For the textual materials, the best survey is the extensive account of the manuscripts in *Girardi, 485–500.
11. See *_Corpus_ 484; also see *Barocchi, _Michelangelo_, cat. 376, which transcribes the letter. It is also catalogued as *_Carteggio_ CCCXCIII (2.142). For Figure 2-4, see *_Corpus_ 273, as well as *Barocchi, _Michelangelo_, cat. 342 (with the attribution to Mini), and *deTolnay, Archivio, 409–14. For discussion of the work done by Michele di Piero, and his relations with the Master, see William E. Wallace, _Michelangelo at San Lorenzo: The Genius as Entrepreneur_ (Cambridge 1994), Chapter 1.
12. For a fuller discussion of Antonio Mini, as his regards his participation in the production of drawings and his relations with Michelangelo, see below, Chapter 6.
13. For discussions of attribution, see *_Corpus_ 59, and *Dussler, cat. 264 (both positive); and *Barocchi, _Michelangelo_, cat. 241 (negative).
14. See *_Corpus_ 64 for discussion of attribution (positive) vs. *Barocchi, _Michelangelo_, cat. 363, and *Dussler, cat. 396 (negative).
15. *_Corpus_ 63; deTolnay comes closest to accepting the drawing as autograph. *Barocchi, _Michelangelo_, cat. 359, gives it to Mini, while *Dussler, cat. 398, merely specifies "pupil." The letter is catalogued as CCCLXXXV in *_Carteggio_ (2.133). *Ramsden, 1.122–23, translates and annotates the document.
16. On the drawings, see *_Corpus_ 440 and *Barocchi, _Michelangelo_, cat. 365. The letter is transcribed in Barocchi and catalogued as DCCLXVII in *_Carteggio_ (3.220–21).
17. The poem is G34. For its appearance on various manuscripts in various forms, see *Girardi, 186–88. In its final form—at least as reconstructed by Girardi—the relevant lines are "né puo non rivederlo in quel che more | di te, per nostro mal, mie gran desio" ("and so my great desire cannot but see God again in that part of you which, to our misfortune, dies").
18. See *_Corpus_ 267. *Joannides, _Michel Ange_, cat. 30, transcribes all the texts and ascribes the putto on the verso to Michelangelo. For different readings of the recto subject, see *_Corpus_; *Hartt, _Drawings_, cat. 465; and *Dussler, cat. 356. On the erotic associations of the combat, deTolnay's comment is "La lotta fra i due si trasforma subcoscientemente in un abbraccio."
19. For his textual work on this very fragmentary piece of writing, G31, see *Girardi, 183–84, which makes it clear that in the official text the editor has supplied the opening of every one of the fourteen lines. His ingenuity gives way after the break furnished by the horizontal lines, and he prints the succeeding verses as fragment A27. Both poetic segments concern themselves with the pains of earthly love and the prospect of

an afterlife that is also tormented, topics so ubiquitous in the *Rime* that their conjunction does not help us determine whether this is one poem or two.

20. On the medium itself, see Ames-Lewis, *Drawing*, 55–56. On Michelangelo's use of the medium, see *Hirst, *Drawings*, 6–8, and *Chapman, 22–23. The fact that Leonardo had made notable pioneering use of the medium, e.g., in his famous Turin self-portrait and in studies for apostles in the *Last Supper*, may well have given it some of its aura. Michelangelo will go on to execute several of the most finished of the presentation drawings, including the *Archers* and the *Labors of Hercules*, in the same medium.
21. See references on the history of collecting drawings, in note 4, above.
22. I am thinking of such work as Ames-Lewis (cited above in note 2), and *Rosand. See also the chapter entitled "Drawing and How It Is Produced" in *Perrig, esp. 15–30; and the first chapter, entitled "Drawing, Memory, and Invention," in Cammy Brothers, *Michelangelo, Drawing, and the Invention of Architecture* (New Haven, CT 2008), 9–43, a subtle and persuasive set of arguments whose relevance goes beyond the subject of architectural drawing per se.
23. In addition to **Corpus* 49, see *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 6, where the text is transcribed. Also see *Dussler, cat. 56; Hirst, *Michelangelo Draftsman*, cat. 5; and J. Wilde, "Eine Studie Michelangelos nach der Antike," *Mitteilungen des kunsthistorischen Instituts in Florenz* 4 (1932–34): 41–64.
24. For this, and other, notes relating to expenditures on behalf of his nephew Leonardo during this period, see **Ricordi*, 242–46. See also the apparently contemporary letter from Leonardo's father, Buonarroto, expressing frustration with the boy, "perché egli è molto vivo e gli à qualche chostumo che non mi piace. . . . Egli è mal sollecito, e pare semplice ed è reo. Per tanto bisongnia per ora avere pazienzia" (**Carteggio* DCCLXXX [3.261], from September 1528).
25. **Corpus* 256. See also the extensive account of the drawing in *deTolnay, *Medici*, 50–51, which identifies the figure as part of a Resurrection. *Wilde, *British*, 87, proposes that it forms part of a *Noli me tangere*.
26. The text is catalogued as CCXLVI in **Ricordi*, 273–74. On issues surrounding the death of Michelangelo's father, see *Ramsden, 1.295–97.
27. Already in the 1550 edition of the *Lives*, Vasari opens the account of Michelangelo with a catalogue of his multifarious talents. The ruler of heaven, he says, "decided to free us from so many errors by sending down a spirit who would be so universally skilful in every craft and art that his work alone would demonstrate how to solve the real difficulties in the sciences of drawing and painting, how to work with judgement in sculpture and how to create truly pleasing architecture. And he chose also to grant him true moral philosophy, with the ornament of sweet poetry, so that the world might choose and look up to him as a singular model in life, in works, in holiness of conduct, and in all human actions, and that we might acclaim him as being of heaven rather than of earth" (*Michelangelo*, A. Mortimer, trans., 151; for the Italian, see Bellosi, Rossi, eds., 880). By the time of the funeral orations in 1564, multiplicity of talents is the ruling topos for referring to Michelangelo. On that theme, and its relation to what was supposed to be the artist's personal emblem, see below, Chapter 3.
28. See below, Chapter 4 and Chapter 7.
29. I borrow the expression from William E. Wallace's delightful *New York Times* op-ed piece, which ran on 16 April 1994.
30. See the first entry, which the editors date to April of 1508, in **Ricordi*, 1: "as regards the tomb, I require four hundred ducats"; "for the lining of a leather jacket…."
31. In addition to **Corpus* 175, see *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 36; *Dussler, cat. 136; and *Hartt, *Drawings*, cat. 199, which cover the range of possibilities for the presumed destinations of the drawings. The text on the verso appears as XCIX in **Ricordi*, 102–3.
32. **Corpus* 207bis, which was probably joined originally to **Corpus* 300; also see *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 344, which transcribes the texts. The notation relative to the purchase of straw is catalogued, as well as CCXXXVII, in **Ricordi*, 266–67. The fullest account of this work, including its connection with **Corpus* 300, is Johannes Wilde, "Notes on the Genesis of Michelangelo's *Leda*" in *Fritz Saxl 1890–1948: A Volume of Essays,* D. J. Gordon, ed. (London 1957), 270–80. This sheet will be discussed further in Chapter 8 below.
33. For notes on the textual circumstances surrounding these poems, as well as reference to the annotations by Michelangelo's great-nephew to the effect that they may constitute one single poem, see *Girardi, *Rime*, 194–96.
34. **Corpus* 539; see also *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 339.
35. The poem is G88. For a discussion of its textual appearances—including a fuller manuscript version and quotations within Varchi's *Due Lezzioni*—see *Girardi, *Rime*, 269–70. Translation mine.
36. **Corpus* 379. See also *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 147, and *Dussler, cat. 290. *Girardi, *Rime* (278–79) considers the fragment an early draft of G95, where the relevant lines are "Rendigli al cor mie lasso e

rasserena | tua scura faccia al mie visivo acume" ("give these back to my weary heart, and make your dark face clear for my power of sight").

37. By an admittedly not very scientific count, I would say that, if we exclude architectural drawings and sheets that have obviously been cut down, fewer than one in six drawings appears alone on any face of a page—that is, without any unrelated markings.
38. *_Corpus_ 278. See also *Barocchi, _Michelangelo_, cat. 349, which details the connections to other drawings relative to the Medici Tombs.
39. The letter on this sheet is catalogued as DCCLXIX in the *_Carteggio_ (3.250) and dated tentatively to February of 1527. For the sequence leading up to it, see *_Carteggio_ DCLXII (3.103), in which he asks for a house and for a reckoning of how much salary is due to him; DCXCVII (3. 144–45), in which he talks about a lawsuit; and DCCLXIII (3.244), in which he refers to an accusation that he had been squandering the pope's money. For annotated translations, see *Ramsden, cat. 166, 168, 179, 180.
40. See H. Pfeiffer, "On the Meaning of a Late Michelangelo Drawing," _Art Bulletin_ 48 (1966): 227. The standard work on this theme, which does not reference Michelangelo, is James Breckenridge, "'Et prima vidit': The Iconography of the Appearance of Christ to His Mother," _Art Bulletin_ 39 (1957): 9–32. For other accounts of the drawing, see *_Corpus_ 400 and K. T. Parker, _Catalogue of the Collection of Drawings in the Ashmolean Museum_ (Oxford 1962), cat. 345. But see also Joannides, cited in the next note.
41. See the very complete and persuasive account of this sheet in *Joannides, _Ashmolean_, cat. 50, making clear for the first time how these notations might fit into Michelangelo's connections to Urbino's widow. The fact that the Venusti paintings included an _Annunciation_ may connect this piece of writing with the adjacent drawing in a more substantial way.
42. See *Hartt, _Drawings_: " . . . for all [the inscription's] appearance as a religious revelation" (cat. 435), and J. C. Robinson, _A Critical Account of the Drawings of Michel Angelo and Raffaello in the University Galleries, Oxford_ (Oxford 1870), cat. 74: "this might be supposed to be some religious text disposed as if in the midst of a burst of light projected from on high towards the Virgin."
43. _Purgatorio_, 10.43–45. For more on this word-image connection, see below, Chapter 3.

3 PICTURE WRITING

1. For the full text of the pope's letters in which he formulates this position, see the excellent treatment in Celia M. Chazelle, "Pictures, Books, and the Illiterate: Pope Gregory I's Letters to Serenus of Marseille," _Word and Image_ 6 (1990): 138–52.
2. On this set of themes, see the still invaluable work of August Schmarsow, _Italienische Kunst im Zeitalter Dantes_ (Augsburg 1928). For readings of the _Purgatorio_ passage in relation to visual arts, see H. D. Austin, "The Arrangement of Dante's Purgatorial Reliefs," _PMLA_ 47 (1932): 1–9; Gloria K. Fiero, "Dante's Ledge of Pride: Literary Pictorialism and the Visual Arts," _Journal of European Studies_ 5 (1975): 1–17; and Peter Brieger, Millard Meiss, and Charles Singleton, _Illuminated Manuscripts of the Divine Comedy_ (Princeton, NJ 1969), 1.165–66. For Michelangelo's own relations to Dante, see Corrado Gizzi, _Michelangelo e Dante_ (Milan 1995), 221–32; Paul Barolsky, "The Visionary Art of Michelangelo in the Light of Dante," _Dante Studies_ 114 (1996): 1–14; and Bernadine Barnes, _Michelangelo's_ Last Judgment: _The Renaissance Response_ (Berkeley, CA 1998), 102–23.
3. On these issues in medieval art, see, for instance, William J. Diebold, _Word and Image: An Introduction to Early Medieval Art_ (Boulder, CO 2000). On the illustration of canonical classical texts, see two good introductions: M.J.H. Liversidge, "Virgil in Art" in _The Cambridge Companion to Virgil_, C. Martindale, ed. (Cambridge 1997), 91–103, and Christopher Allen, "Ovid and Art" in _The Cambridge Companion to Ovid_, Philip Hardie, ed. (Cambridge 2002), 336–67. For Vasari on Cimabue, see above, Chapter 1, note 24. On Mantegna, see Ronald Lightbown, _Mantegna_ (Berkeley, CA 1986), esp. 140–53, 186–209, and Millard Meiss, _Andrea Mantegna as Illuminator_ (New York 1957). For Leonardo, see above, Chapter 1.
4. See, for instance, the standard work by Leopold D. Ettlinger, _The Sistine Chapel Before Michelangelo: Religious Imagery and Papal Primacy_ (Oxford 1965). Also see John Shearman, "La costruzione della Capella e la prima decorazione al tempo di Sisto IV" in _La Capella Sistina—I primi restauri_ (Novara 1986), 22–87, and the useful set of essays and photographs published as _The Fifteenth Century Frescoes in the Sistine Chapel_, F. Buranelli and A. Duston, eds. (Vatican City 2003).
5. As regards the theological functions of the space, in addition to the works in the previous note, see especially Rona Goffen, "Friar Sixtus and the Sistine Chapel," _Renaissance Quarterly_ 39 (1986): 218–62, as well as Carol F. Lewine, _The Sistine Chapel and the Roman Liturgy_ (University Park, PA 1993), and Andrew C. Blume, "The

Sistine Chapel, Dynastic Ambition, and the Cultural Patronage of Sixtus IV," in *Patronage and Dynasty: The Rise of the Della Rovere in Renaissance Italy,* Ian F. Verstegen, ed. (Kirksville, MO 2007), 3–18.

6. It is worth noting that the magisterial work that has been done on the Chapel's iconography—for instance, the essays of Edgar Wind recently collected as *The Religious Symbolism of Michelangelo: The Sistine Ceiling*, E. Sears, ed. (Oxford 2001); Frederick Hartt, "'Lignum Vitae in Medio Paradisi,' The Stanza D'Eliodoro and the Sistine Ceiling," *Art Bulletin* 33 (1950): 115–45, 181–218; or, more recently, Malcolm Bull, "The Iconography of the Sistine Chapel Ceiling," *Burlington Magazine* 130 (1988): 597–605—rarely tries to pursue its particular arguments via the assumption that Michelangelo was handed a specific set of orders. He himself, for what it's worth, claimed otherwise in his widely cited autobiographical (and self-justifying) letter of December 1523 to Giovan Francesco Fattucci, written a dozen years after the Ceiling was completed. He writes that the Pope "mi decta nuova chommessione che io facessi ciò che io volevo, e che mi chontenterebe" (**Carteggio* DXCIV [3.8]: "Then he gave me a new commission to do what I liked, and he would content me" [*Ramsden, 1.149]).
7. The standard work on the subject, the title of which remains valid, is Margaret Franklin, "Forgotten Images: Papal Portraits in the Sistine Chapel," *Arte cristiana* (1996): 263–69.
8. The exceptions are mostly clustered around the altar end of the Chapel, e.g., Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in one group and Jesse, David, and Solomon in another.
9. From Matthew 1:1–16 and Luke 3:23–38.
10. This is deTolnay's title for his chapter discussing the spandrels and lunettes (*The Sistine Chapel* [Princeton, NJ 1945], 77–92). To be fair, he is referring primarily to the place of these figures in a Neoplatonic scheme rather than to their appearance or their hue. In fact, though, his discussion of their disconnectedness from the rest of the Ceiling's conversations is, I think, quite appropriate. Cf. the more recent work of Margaret Finch, "The Sistine Chapel as a Temenos: An Interpretation Suggested by the Restored Visibility of the Lunettes" in William E. Wallace, ed., *Michelangelo: Selected Scholarship in English* (London 1995), 387–404. For a somewhat different reading of this relationship between images and identities, taking deTolnay's work as a point of departure, see Lisa Pon, "A Note on the Ancestors of Christ in the Sistine Chapel," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 61 (1998): 254–58.
11. The letter appears as **Carteggio* DLII (2.344).
12. This sheet, not generally catalogued among the letters, appears as **Corpus* 367 and in *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 356. See also the entry in **Grafia*, cat. 45. For more on the correspondence surrounding the epitaphs, see below, Chapter 6.
13. For more on hieroglyphs, see Chapter 1, note 3.
14. Out of nearly five hundred letters, I count only four instances where he refers to his address on the inside along with the body of the text: **Carteggio* CMXXXVI (4.55), CMXC (4.130–31), MXXIII (4.185), and MXXIV (4.186). All but one are addressed to Luigi del Riccio, and on two of those occasions he performs a different playful twist by turning "Macel de' Corvi" into "Macel de' Poveri." It should be pointed out that, since many of the extant letters are autograph copies rather than documents that were actually sent and delivered, it is difficult to be certain what significance should be attached to the placement of the address.
15. The letter is catalogued as CCLXII (**Carteggio* [1.328], dated 18 March 1518); the drawing appears as **Corpus* 117. For Michelangelo's direct response to this letter, see **Carteggio* CCXX (1.276, dated 2 May 1517); his subsequent, more extensive (and crankier) response is **Carteggio* CCCLXXXVIII (2.134, dated December 1518). The affair is still rankling in 1525, when he writes to the pope (**Carteggio* DCLXXXVIII [3.132]), "e priego quella [vostra Santità] che, volendo che io facci chosa nessuna, che non mi dia nell'arte mia uomini sopra capo, e che mi presti fede e diemi libera chommessione" ("if Your Holiness wishes me to accomplish anything, I beg You not to have authorities set over me in my own trade, but to have faith in me and give me a free hand"). The language is very similar to, and contemporaneous with, his recollection of having had free hand on the Sistine Ceiling (see above, note 6). For English versions of these letters, see *Ramsden, cat. 115, 137, and 160; for a discussion of his situation in Pietrasanta, see *Ramsden, 1.261–68.
16. See, for instance, the essay on Michelangelo's thriftiness in *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 341, and the hypotheses concerning his employment of Pietro Urbano as personal shopper, in **Costanza*, cat. 10. But see also Leo Steinberg's discussion of the sheet in *Michelangelo's Last Paintings* (New York 1975), 7.
17. See in this regard the very interesting philosophical arguments in Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste* (Ithaca, NY 1999), as well as the essays in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, D. Hillman and C. Mazzio, eds. (London 1997), especially Carla Mazzio's "Sins of the Tongue" (53–80).
18. This much discussed work is **Corpus* 174. See the very extensive and revealing account of the work in *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 288; see also **Grafia*, cat. 8, and F. Mancinelli, "Michelangelo at Work: The

Painting of the Ceiling" in *The Sistine Chapel: Michelangelo Rediscovered* (London 1986), 218–59. See also Irving Lavin et al., *Drawings by Gian Lorenzo Bernini from the Museum der bildenden Künste*, exh. cat. (Princeton, NJ 1981), 34.

19. Choosing one citation out of many, Vasari on the *Moses*: " . . . to say nothing of the beauty of the face, which has all the air of a true Saint and most dread Prince, you seem, while you gaze upon it, to wish to demand from him the veil wherewith to cover that face, so resplendent and so dazzling it appears to you, and so well has Michelangelo expressed the divinity that God infused in that most holy countenance" (*Vasari-deV 2.661, *Vasari-M 7.166). Note how Vasari conflates what Michelangelo and God have both implanted in the countenance: the combination is such, he implies, that we want to prevent ourselves from seeing it.
20. The poem appears as G5.
21. See the discussions of these matters in my book, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven, CT 1986), esp. 137–49 and 175–206.
22. A set of reasonable conjectures links the addressee of this poem with that of G10 (an invective against the materialism of the church in Rome) and, more assuredly, with that of G71 (an invective against the addressee and his fellow citizens of Pistoia). The whole correspondence is playful even when angry: the poetic mode is indebted to the satirical work of Francesco Berni, and, in the case of G10 (for which see below), Michelangelo touches upon a different parodic manner by signing the poem facetiously. For poetic communication flowing from Giovanni *to* Michelangelo, also Berni-esque, see Carl Frey, ed., *Die Dichtungen des Michelagniolo Buonarroti* (Berlin 1897), 260–62.
23. Vasari's account: "Fu condotta questa opera con suo grandissimo disagio dello stare a lavorare col capo all'insù, e talmente avevo guasto la vista, che non poteva leggere lettere, né guardar disegni, se non all'insù" (*Vasari-M 7.178; for translation, see *Vasari-deV 2.675). Condivi has heard the same story about the eyesight (*Condivi-H/E 35, *Condivi-W 58). Paolo Giovio describes it differently in his "Michaelis Angeli Vita": "Quum resupinus, uti necesse erat . . . " (*Scritti d'arte del cinquecento*, P. Barocchi, ed. [Milan 1971], 1.10). Fabrizio Mancinelli discusses this question, and the interpretation of Giovio's *resupinus*, in "The Restoration of the Sistine Chapel: Michelangelo Rediscovered" in *The Genius of the Sculptor in Michelangelo's Work*, exh. cat. (Montreal 1992), 333. See also the testimony offered by Michelangelo's great-nephew, which appears among the marginalia to his own manuscript of the poems; he has clearly seen the autograph sheet with the drawing, and writes, "Si vede che fa [sic] fatto nel dipingere la volta di Sisto et in margine all'originale si vede uno schizzo nell'attitudine che descrive il sonetto dipignere in alto, dove è accennata una figura pendente come in una volta o soffitta" (cited in *Girardi, 159). Dating from around 1620, these may be the first ever comments relating the words and pictures on a sheet of Michelangelo's drawings.
24. The whole analysis is worth careful attention for its remarkable methodological sophistication. See *deTolnay, Archivio, 425–28.
25. For references to the *Marsyas*, see Vasari in the *Life* of Donatello (*Vasari-M 2.407) and the *Life* of Verrocchio (*Vasari-M 3.366–67).
26. The subject of Michelangelo's possible self-portraits has remained, deservedly, a ruling topos of analyzing him and his work, with or without the Leonardoesque opprobrium associated with "ogni dipintore dipinge sè" (for which see above, Chapter 1). Representations of himself have been discerned in everything from an early drawing (**Corpus* 18, for which see below, Chapter 5), to the Judith and Holofernes scene on the Sistine Ceiling, to the face on the skin of St. Bartholomew in the *Last Judgment* (the most universally agreed upon), to the central figures of Peter and Paul (or certain of the onlookers) in the Pauline Chapel, to the Nicodemus figure in the late Florentine *Pietà*. For more on this subject, see below, Chapter 4.
27. Cf. Leonardo's famous comments about the elegance of the painter's studio as over against the griminess of the sculptor's studio, for which see *Leonardo on Painting*, M. Kemp, ed. (New Haven, CT 1989), 38–39.
28. It is interesting to observe this trend throughout the *Rezeptionsgechichte* of Michelangelo. As suggested above in Chapter 2, his multiple talents were a focus of the funeral services conducted in 1564. Even more intriguing in this regard are some marginal comments by the artist's great-nephew (see above, note 23), who was planning both a biography and an epic poem about his illustrious relative, neither of which works was ever completed. In his notes to himself about the project, he reiterates the Master's own concerns about being thought of as in any way a manual laborer, but he goes further: "Per la vita di Michelagnolo. Che è filosofo che specula e imita gli affetti che opera di filosofo. Perche il filosofo non è chi studia gli altri scritti ma gli contempla e chi si puo egli dire che habbia meglio e più contemplato che colui che referisce e sale contemplazioni delli altri, o pur colui che spiana le sue contemplazione proprie con la penna o pennello o scarpello" (Casa Buonarroti, MS87iv c. 13v; cited in Adriaan W. Vliegenthart, *La Galleria Buonarroti: Michelangelo e Michelangelo il Giovane*, trans. G. Faggin [Florence 1976], 15).

29. The poem is G173. For discussions of this sheet, see *_Grafia_, cat. 44, *_Costanza_, 48–51; and Pina Ragionieri, _Michelangelo: The Man and the Myth_, exh. cat. (Syracuse, NY 2008), cat. 5.
30. See above, Chapter 1. On this subject within Michelangelo's writings, see *Clements, _Poetry_ (New York 1966), 178–80.
31. For this assertion, see *Hirst, _Drawings_, 5–6. Personal conversation with Carmen Bambach, as we viewed this sheet in the Syracuse exhibition (see note 29 above), confirmed that colored paper was very unusual in sixteenth-century practice.
32. It is not clear from the Italian _il volto_ whether the drained face belongs to the speaker or to the _donna_. See *Residori, 294–95, for the intriguing suggestion that this grammatical confusion is a deliberate part of the logic of exchange within the poem.

4 MAKING A NAME

1. For all of these materials, see _The Divine Michelangelo: The Florentine Academy's Homage on His Death in 1564_, R. and M. Wittkower, eds. (London 1964), a facsimile edition with an invaluable introduction and annotations. For the segment of Vasari's _Life of Michelangelo_ that rehearses these events, see *Vasari-M 7.296– 317; *Vasari-deV 2.754–69.
2. Translation cited from _Divine Michelangelo_, 121. The Latin quotation comes from Horace, _Odes_, 1.1.8.
3. Some subtextual implications nevertheless go unremarked: the original context for the Horatian line is the celebration not of an artist but of a patron. It is also presented in the original poem as a vainglorious boast rather than as a solid achievement.
4. For a meticulous account of these practices, see *Wallace, "Drawings." On this particular matter of record-keeping, see his note 43.
5. For this sheet, see *_Corpus_, cat. 467, and *Barocchi, _Michelangelo_, cat. 317. These sheets, and the marbles that they depict, will be discussed more extensively below, in Chapter 6.
6. Wallace makes some plausible conjectures about the meaning of these signs. The trident "appears to be an orientation mark, perhaps indicating the marble grain or the direction of the cleavage planes in the block from which the block was removed," while the half-moon suggests to him "a sailing vessel—a _barca_—which might indicate that the block was one of those already at the marina for loading and dispatching" (*Wallace, "Drawings," 129). But, given the non-standard nature of the signs, these must remain conjectures. I would, for instance, point out that both the trident and the half-moon could be said to resemble masons' tools. Zygmunt Waźbiński raises doubts even about the association of the circles with Michelangelo, suggesting that they may have been a mark of the Medici (_L'Accademia medicea del disegno a Firenze nel Cinquecento_ [Florence 1987], 1.172–76).
7. The letter to Perini appears as *_Carteggio_ DLI (2.343, dated February 1522). So far as questions about the canonicity of this emblem are concerned, it is perhaps also worth noting that the seventy or so instances of the three circles on drawings of marble blocks consistently contradict the Vasarian claim (see the quotation above; the geometrical details are slightly less specific in the version that appears in Vasari's _Life_ [*Vasari-M 7.313, *Vasari-deV 2.767]) that each circle touches the center of the others.
8. See the superb chapter on "European Precedents" in John Wilmerding, _Signatures and Self-Expression in American Paintings_ (New Haven, CT 2003), 1–37; and Rona Goffen, "Signatures: Inscribing Identity in Italian Renaissance Art," _Viator_ 32 (2001): 303–70. See also Kathleen Weil-Garris Brandt, "Michelangelo's _Pietà_ for the Capella del Re di Francia" in _"Il se rendit en Italie": Etudes offertes à André Chastel_ (Paris, 1987), 77–108, and Lisa Pon, "Michelangelo's First Signature," _Notes in the History of Art_ 15 (1996): 16–21.
9. For the 1568 version, see *Vasari-M 7.151–52, *Vasari-deV 2.652. For the 1550 version, see Vasari, _Le Vite_, L. Bellosi and A. Rossi, eds. (Turin 1986), 886; for translation, see Michelangelo, _Poems and Letters_, A. Mortimer, trans., 156. For the trail of anecdotal material relating to these circumstances, see *Barocchi, _Vita_, 2.187–88. On these subjects, I benefited greatly from a brilliant, and unpublished, paper by Rudolf Preimesberger ("Michelangelo and the Genre of the Contemporary Critical Anecdote") given at Syracuse University in October 2008.
10. For Vasari inserting the publication of his first edition into Michelangelo's life in the second edition—shades of _Don Quixote_, Parts One and Two—as well as the ensuing Michelangelo sonnet (G277, "Se con lo stile o coi colori avete"), see *Vasari-M 7.228–29, *Vasari-deV 2.705–6.
11. *Vasari-M 7.152, *Vasari-deV 2.652.
12. The commonest form of the signature is _Michelagnolo in . . . _, followed by the location in which he is writing the letter. _Vostro_ sometimes signals a special friendship, but not always. Not surprisingly, the elaborate

formulas tend to be used for addressing grand personages, e.g., the King of France (*_Carteggio_* MLXI [4.237]) or the Duke of Florence (MCCCXXX [5.221]), but among less lofty addressees there is little pattern.

13. _Michelagnolo scultore_ is most frequent in the early and middle phases of his career, perhaps signifying a wish to "brand" himself, as we would now say; then it largely drops away. _Io Michelagniolo_ turns up with some frequency near the end of his life (e.g., *_Carteggio_* MCCCLXXV–VII [5.284–86]).
14. *_Corpus_* 19. See the invaluable entry in *Joannides, _Michel-Ange_, cat. 4, where there is an extensive bibliography. Among analyses of the written phrase, I have been particularly aided by Charles Seymour, Jr., _Michelangelo's David: A Search for Identity_ (New York 1967), esp. 3–17; *Goffen, _Rivals_, 119–39, and the work of Irving Lavin, for which see note 28 below. Provocative, if not altogether persuasive, are the conclusions drawn by Robert J. Clements, which depend on a lost pedestal for the statue supposedly inscribed with a poem, possibly related to the text written on this sheet, and perhaps available via Ronsard's translation; see *Clements, _Poetry_, 154–60, and, with a somewhat different argument, the same author's _Michelangelo's Theory of Art_ (New York 1961), 415–20.
15. The most comprehensive accounts of these developments are those of *deTolnay, _Youth_, 93–99, 150–55, 205–9; and Seymour, _Michelangelo's David_, 21–41 and _passim_.
16. On Verrocchio, see Andrew Butterfield, _The Sculptures of Andrea del Verrocchio_ (New Haven, CT 1997), 18–31, 204–5; on Donatello, see H. W. Janson, _The Sculpture of Donatello_ (Princeton, NJ 1963), 3–7, 77–86 and "Donatello and the Antique," _Donatello e il suo tempo_ (Florence 1966), 77–96; Laurie Schneider, "Donatello's Bronze David," _Art Bulletin_ 55 (1973): 213–16; Christine M. Sperling, "Donatello's Bronze 'David' and the Demands of Medici Politics," _Burlington Magazine_ 134 (1992): 218–24; Francis Ames-Lewis, "Art History or _Stilkritik_? Donatello's Bronze David Reconsidered," _Art History_ 2 (1979): 139–55; and Sarah Blake McHam, "Donatello's Bronze _David_ and _Judith_ as Metaphors of Medici Rule in Florence," _Art Bulletin_ 83 (2001): 32–47.
17. See the text and translation of these discussions in Seymour, _Michelangelo's David_, 139–55. See also N. Randolph Parks, "The Placement of Michelangelo's David: A Review of the Documents," _Art Bulletin_ 57 (1975): 560–70; and Adrian W. B. Randolph, _Engaging Symbols: Gender, Politics, and Public Art in Fifteenth-Century Florence_ (New Haven, CT 2002).
18. Giovanni Gaye, _Carteggio inediti d'artisti dei secoli XIV, XV, XVI_ (Florence 1840), 2.52. Translation mine. See below for a discussion of the verb _gittare_.
19. For the 1502 contract, see Lucilla Bardeschi Ciulich, _I Contratti di Michelangelo_ (Florence 2005), 16–17. On the long, sad story of what happens to this project, see *deTolnay, _Youth_, 205–9.
20. These narratives concerning the youthful artist, born out of some mixture of legend and fact, appear in the early parts of both contemporary biographies. See *Vasari-M 7.142, 147–49, *Vasari-deV 2.646, 650–51; and *Condivi-H/E 11–12, 17–18, *Condivi-W 12–13, 19–21.
21. On the possibility that it was the Verrocchio and not the Donatello, see *Joannides, _Michel-Ange_, 72.
22. The fullest account, including all the documents in the history of the marble block, is once again Seymour, _Michelangelo's David_, but see also the indispensable account by *Goffen, _Rivals_, 118–35. For Vasari, see *Vasari-M 7.152–55, *VasarideV 2.653–55. For Condivi, see *Condivi-H/E 21–22, *Condivi-W 27–29.
23. For the importance of these works and these artistic categories in Renaissance consciousness, see my _Unearthing the Past: Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture_ (New Haven, CT 1999), 112–14.
24. Examples, all drawn from Seymour's collection of the documents, each with its date followed by the page number in Seymour: "homo magnus et albus" (1412, 114); "uno gughante" (1463, 122); "unum gighans" (1466, 130); "una statua di marmo fatta venire dacCharrara" (1477, 134); "quendam hominem vocato Gigante" (1501, 136).
25. See, once again, Seymour, _Michelangelo's David_, 21–41, 97–137 for all these possible subjects and artists.
26. See Seymour, _Michelangelo's David_, 85 for reference to this definition.
27. See Marcel Brion, _Michelangelo_ (New York 1940), 102; and Seymour, _Michelangelo's David_, 7–8, 84–85.
28. See "David's Sling and Michelangelo's Bow: A Sign of Freedom" in Lavin, _Past-Present: Essays on Historicism in Art from Donatello to Picasso_ (Berkeley, CA 1993), 28–58.
29. The image is taken from Fanti, _Triompho di Fortuna_ (Venice 1527), where it is card 38; see Lavin, "David's Sling," 41–43.
30. Citation is to _Rime_ 269, in *Petrarca, _Canzoniere_. The translation is from *Petrarch, Durling. All quotations from the _Rime_ will be taken from these two editions.
31. For this reference to _Rime_ 271, which Michelangelo inscribes (not quite accurately) on a drawing (*_Corpus_ 20), see below, Chapter 5 and Chapter 8.
32. See the eloquent treatment of this Medicean theme in Janet Cox-Rearick, _Dynasty and Destiny in Medici Art_ (Princeton, NJ 1984), 15–40. See also Lavin's treatment of the theme across the gap between Petrarch and

Michelangelo in "David's Sling," 51–53 (note 28 above).

33. See discussion of these matters below, in Chapter 6.
34. The episode, which appears at *Metamorphoses* 1.452–73, becomes the underlying narrative from Petrarch onwards for the agon between the amorous speaker's devotion to manly pursuits and his collapse in the face of desire. See, for instance, Petrarch's *Rime* 2, and (not coincidentally) Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* 2.
35. The fullest account of this conjunction with the various creative powers—both linguistic and material—of the two mythic musicians, is to be found in Martianus Capella, *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, 9. The passage is translated in Joscelyn Godwin, *Music, Mysticism, and Magic: A Sourcebook* (London 1986), 36–37. More proximate to Michelangelo's consciousness, Petrarch turns the myths, via Cicero, into a discussion of rhetoric in *Familiares*, 1.9.
36. See *Girardi, 473, and *Residori, 468.
37. On this point, see Irving Lavin, "Bozzetti and Modelli: Notes on Sculptural Procedure from the Early Renaissance through Bernini" in *Stil und Überlieferung in der Kunst des Abendlandes* (Berlin 1967), 3.93–104. It is also worth pointing out that, at least later in his career, Michelangelo will become all but obsessed with the image of removing or reducing stone as an expression of some fundamental move toward perfection or essence. See, for instance, his *Rime* G152: "Sì come per levar, donna, si pone | in pietra alpestra e dura | una viva figura . . . " ("Just as, lady, it is by removing that one places in hard, alpine stone a living figure . . . "). Also see Michelangelo's response to Benedetto Varchi's survey of the difference between painting and sculpture: "Io intendo scultura quella che si fa per forza di levare; quella che si fa per via di porre è simile a la pictura" (**Carteggio* MLXXXII [4.265–66]: "by 'sculpture,' I mean that which one does by means of removing; that which one does by way of adding is similar to painting.")
38. For an unusually lucid example of the kind of modern rhetorical analysis to which I am alluding, involving concepts like *supplément* and *différance*, see Barbara Johnson's chapter on "Writing" in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, F. Lentricchia and T. McLaughlin, eds. (Chicago 1990), 39–49; for their thornier original formulations, see Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, A. Bass, trans. (Chicago 1978). On the relations of Michelangelo's poetry to seventeenth-century models, see, for instance, *Cambon, 77; the subject is *Rime* G151, the famous sonnet "Non ha l'ottima artista alcun concetto," which Cambon characterizes as "an early example of baroque 'metaphysical' style." In general, terms such as "baroque" (or "mannerist," even though it is often understood as contradictory to "baroque") have been widely used in reference to Michelangelo's poetry (e.g., *Clements, *Poetry*, 38–59). Whatever the validity of such designations as applied to literature, or as applied across the gap between literature and the visual arts—and this, too has a long history, e.g., Wylie Sypher, *Four Stages of Renaissance Style* (Garden City, NY 1955)—the reference in the case of this particular poet seems to involve the ways in which complex rhetorical strategies reflect an engagement in philosophical modes of thought.
39. *Leonardo on Painting*, M. Kemp, ed. (New Haven, CT 1989), 38.
40. The famous lines are: "Humano capiti ceruicem pictor equinam | iungere si uelit et uarias inducere plumas, | undique collatis membris ut turpiter atrum | desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne, | spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici?" *Epistle to the Pisones*, N. Rudd, ed. (Cambridge 1989). ("If a painter chose to join a human head to the neck of a horse, and to spread feathers of many a hue over limbs picked up now here now there, so that what at the top is a lovely woman ends below in a black and ugly fish, could you, my friends, if favored with a private view, refrain from laughing?" *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica*, H. R. Fairclough, trans., Loeb Classical Library [Cambridge, MA 1929].)
41. See the excellent survey of the tradition in Butterfield, *Sculptures of Verrocchio*, 22–31, and the same author's "New Evidence for the Iconography of David in Quattrocento Florence," *I Tatti Studies in the Renaissance* 6 (1995): 115–33.
42. I have used *Eerdman's Dictionary of the Bible*, D. M. Freedman, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI 2000), s.v. "weights and measures."
43. It should be noted that the plate does include a second scene, below, in which the two combatants are positioned so that it is possible to indicate a difference in stature. For a fine study of one medieval work and its tradition, see Steven H. Wander, "The Cyprus Plates: The Story of David and Goliath," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 8 (1973): 89–104. See also Kirk Ambrose, *The Nave Sculpture of Vézélay: The Art of Monastic Viewing* (Toronto 2006), 83–84, 101–2.
44. "David's Sling," 48–50.
45. For Verrocchio, see Butterfield, *Sculptures*, 204; for the Donatello *Davids*, Janson, *Sculpture*, 3, 77; for Michelangelo, *deTolnay, *Youth*, 150.

46. There is no broad agreement on whether the *David* is holding anything in his hand: even standing in front of the statue itself there is room for disagreement on this point.

5 CROWDED SHEETS

1. The male nudes, apart from those discussed below, include **Corpus* 22r (Albertina, Stix 132), 23r (Louvre 689), 34r (Louvre 727), and 36 (Uffizi 233F). Figures resembling the *Laocoön* sons—that is, bodies in some sort of vertical positioning, often with one bent knee—include **Corpus* 21v (discussed below), 42r and v (Louvre 712), 45v (Uffizi 612E), and 47v (Louvre 718). The Leda-Ganymede configuration can be seen in **Corpus* 44r (Uffizi 18737F) and 45r (Uffizi 613E). For putti, see **Corpus* 20v, 25v, 46v, and 48v, all of which are discussed below; for helmeted heads, see **Corpus* 32r (Casa Buonarroti 59F), 33r (Boymans, Rotterdam I185), 34r and v (Louvre 727), and 35r (discussed below).
2. The pioneering and magisterial work on the artistic enterprises in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio is by Johannes Wilde, especially "The Hall of the Great Council of Florence," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 7 (1944): 65–81, along with his "Michelangelo and Leonardo," *Burlington Magazine* 95 (1953): 65–77. See also the brilliant treatment of this project, and the whole relationship of the two artists, in *Goffen, *Rivals*, 143–70.
3. See below, for discussion of **Corpus* 17r and 26r. See Vasari's account of the (subsequently lost) cartoon of the Virgin, Child, and St. Anne that Leonardo exhibited at the SS. Annunziata in 1501 (*Vasari-M 4.37–39, *Vasari-deV 1.635), which "fece maravigliare tutti gli artefici," a moment that can function as a kind of terminus a quo for this influence.
4. For discussions of this sheet, **Corpus* 19v, see above Chapter 4, note 14. It is worth pointing out that if the recto of this sheet contains writing—the self-comparison to David and the quotation from Petrarch's *Rime* 269—its verso also includes a poetic effort (Ga5): "Al dolcie mormorar d'un fiumiciello . . . ," which Robert J. Clements characterizes as a "Petrarchistic fragment" (*Clements, *Poetry*, 283).
5. **Corpus* 21v. For an account of the different possibilities—Haman, Ganymede, St. Sebastian—for which the full figure might have been intended, see *Joannides, *Michel-Ange*, cat. 11. Wherever he may have been going, it is fairly clear where the figure was coming from: he seems to be a sort of amalgam of the two *Laocoön* sons. The text on this sheet will be discussed below.
6. **Corpus* 47. *Joannides, *Michel-Ange*, cat. 9, does an extensive job of outlining the various possible destinations for the figures sketched on both sides of this sheet. As with many of the drawings during this period, it is easier to associate the figures with those on other drawings than with identifiable projects destined for realization.
7. **Corpus* 46. For a discussion of possible destinations for these figures, including the *Battle of Cascina* and the Bruges Madonna, as well as a discussion of the artist's progress in draftsmanship, see *Wilde, *British*, cat. 5. It should be noted that there is extensive (though not always legible) poetic writing on the verso in two separate groupings, but in upside-down relation to each other. These texts appear as G2 ("Sol io ardendo all'ombra . . . ," written in ink) and Ga10 (". . . che Febo alle . . . ," written in black chalk). The themes of the poetic fragments, relating amorous suffering to sunlight, are similar, though the writing is different.
8. See **Corpus* 46r for a proposal as to the order in which the drawings were laid down on this sheet; deTolnay differs with Wilde, for which see previous note.
9. **Corpus* 17. See the very complete account of this sheet in *Joannides, *Ashmolean*, cat. 1.
10. Vasari narrates at some length the story of Michelangelo smashing up the statue that we know as the Florentine *Pietà* (*Vasari-M 7.242–45, *Vasari-deV 2.725– 27). He offers, as he does in many other places, a multiplicity of explanations. Either the stone was too hard, or else Michelangelo's standards were too high; the latter possibility leads into a discussion of how many works he left unfinished. In the statue as we have it, of course, Christ has only one leg, on which see two brilliant essays by Leo Steinberg: "Michelangelo's Florentine 'Pietà': The Missing Leg," *Art Bulletin* 50 (1968): 343–53, and "Animadversions: Michelangelo's Florentine 'Pietà': The Missing Leg Twenty Years After," *Art Bulletin* 71 (1989): 480–505. In fact, throughout his career, Michelangelo exhibits some fascination and repulsion as regards the bent knee, a subject I consider in *Transuming Passion: Ganymede and the Erotics of Humanism* (Stanford, CA 1991), 93–98.
11. **Corpus* 20. *Joannides, *Michel-Ange*, cat. 13, offers a full discussion of both sources and destinations for the major figures, especially on the recto; he also confirms deTolnay's view that all the drawings on the verso are by Michelangelo.
12. Joannides discerns what might be yet another drawing in red chalk, identifiable only by some pen lines that surround it.

13. In this form, it appears as Ga13. Girardi reads the final word as "ch'uom," which conforms to Petrarch's text, but I concur with Joannides, who transcribes Michelangelo's writing as breaking off before "uom" has been written. The translation is from Ryan, except that, in conformity to my reading, I have omitted "man" at the end of the fragment.
14. Petrarch, *Rime* 364: "Tennemi Amor anni ventuno ardendo, | lieto nel foco, et nel duol pien di speme; | poi che madonna e 'l mio cor seco inseme | saliro al ciel, dici altri anni piangendo" ("Love held me twenty-one years gladly burning in the fire and full of hope amid sorrow; since my lady, and my heart with her, rose to Heaven, ten more years of weeping.") For the other reference to a second love, see *Rime* 270, whose language is nevertheless so oblique that one cannot be certain whether it refers to any such circumstance.
15. On this subject, see Chapter 1 above, including the references to both Condivi and Vasari in note 11.
16. These pieces of text appear, respectively, on **Corpus* 48r, 31v, 35r, 48v, and 17v. All are discussed below, with the exception of 31v (Louvre 726).
17. See **Corpus* 35 for a discussion of this work. Thomas Pöpper (in F. Zöllner, C. Thoenes, and T. Pöpper, *Michelangelo: The Complete Works* [Hong Kong 2007], cat. D172) believes this sheet was designed as a teaching exercise, with some of the sketches executed by pupils; but he also dates it to 1504, at a moment too early in Michelangelo's career for there to have been a studio full of pupils. Pöpper also adduces the presence of written names on the sheet as evidence that these pupils were signing their work, which seems to me unlikely, since it is not a practice that can be observed elsewhere and since it would not explain the other fragments of text on the sheet.
18. Note deTolnay's idea that the drawing consists of one divine and one demonic head (**Corpus* 35); whether or not that juxtaposition is operating here, the drawing does suggest a significant pattern of oppositions, for which see the discussion in Chapter 6 below.
19. A valuable account of Michelangelo's drawing in regard to crosshatching is to be found in *Hirst, *Drawings*, for instance: "the figurative pen drawings of the early years of the sixteenth century show the final refinement and perfection of the fine cross-hatching technique that he had learned years earlier from Ghirlandaio" (26). See also the treatment of the subject in *Perrig, 64–66.
20. "Dolce mio caro et preciöso pegno | che Natura mi tolse, e 'l Ciel mi guarda, | deh come è tua pietà ver me sì tarda, | o usata di mia vita sostegno" ("Sweet, dear, and precious pledge of mine, whom Nature took from me and Heaven keeps for me: ah, how is it that your pity for me is so tardy, O accustomed sustainer of my life?").
21. In a personal communication, William Wallace has suggested to me that there appears to be a truncated version of the sculptor's *arco* (see the discussion above in Chapter 4 of the *David* drawings) visible above the head of the helmeted figure, which he sees as a sign that Michelangelo, sensing that he cannot imitate Petrarch's sorrow, steps back from the use of words and reverts to the more familiar realm of making images.
22. **Corpus* 26; see discussion there of the gestures and their possible relation to different iconographic subject matters. On some of the same questions, see *Dussler, cat. 208. See also the excellent account of this sheet in *Joannides, *Michel-Ange*, cat. 16, where the discussion of possible destinations for the figures on this sheet begins, "Aucune étude, ni au recto ni au verso, ne peut être rattachée de façon certaine à un projet connu." See the same entry for the various interpretations that have been offered for the writing on the drawing.
23. See above, Chapter 4.
24. **Corpus* 48. See also *Wilde, *British*, cat. 4 (but see as well his entry for cat. 5). Both sides of the sheet contain writing by Michelangelo and writing *not* by Michelangelo, including the beginning of a letter on the recto and, on the verso, the phrase "choses de bruges," which may suggest someone's idea (certainly not Michelangelo's) that the adjacent sketches were part of the artist's efforts toward the Bruges Madonna.
25. **Corpus* 36. See the extensive developmental account of Michelangelo's early work as visible on this sheet in *Wilde, *British*, cat. 3, as well as *Dussler, cat. 170. My personal gratitude goes to the many colleagues who responded to a paper I gave on this drawing at the Villa Spelman during the earliest phases of my work on this project.
26. See above, note 2, for literature on the parallel (or not so parallel) projects by Leonardo and Michelangelo in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio. I am also very grateful to the marvelous conference organized by Michael Cole at the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Italian Studies on the occasion of the five hundredth anniversary of the project in 2005.
27. A useful account of the history of this project is to be found in *deTolnay, *Youth*, 168–71.
28. The beginning of this phrase is not legible, as Wilde's transcription ("… *olore sta(n)za nell inferno*") makes clear. The letter "d" in "dolore" is a (highly probable) conjecture, based on the presence of "dol" elsewhere

on the sheet. Girardi's version (Ga7) is "dolce stanza nell'inferno" ("sweet abode in hell"). One might also read it as "ore stanza nellinferno" ("hours remaining in hell").

29. See *Hartt, *Drawings*, cat. 22.
30. See, for instance, Michaël J. Amy, "Michelangelo's Drawings for Apostle Statues for the Cathedral of Florence," *Viator* 37 (2006): 479–517. See as well the especially inspiring pages on the *Matthew* in Howard Hibbard, *Michelangelo* (New York 1974), 92–95.
31. See the review of this work and his conclusions regarding the question of Michelangelo's plans for the Apostles, in *Joannides, *Michel-Ange*, cat. 5.
32. The *loci classici* are Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 2.13.12–13, and Cicero, *Orator*, 22.74. For a fuller account of the early modern reception, including the commentary in Alberti (*De pictura*, Book 2, §42) and the artistic practice of Donatello, see my *Unearthing the Past* (New Haven, CT 1999), 357n4. On this subject, I am indebted to the work of my student, Paolo Alei: "'Intellegitur plus semper quam pingitur': The Renaissance Heritage of Timanthes' Veil," D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford 2002.
33. The figure of *aposiopesis*, related to other figures like *interpellatio* and *reticentia*, may cover any sort of interrupted speech, such as, famously, Neptune's *Quos ego . . .* in *Aeneid*, 1.135, when the sea-god must terminate his oration about the winds in order to do something about calming them. For the whole range of the trope's possibilities, positive and negative, see Heinrich Lausberg, *A Handbook of Literary Rhetoric*, D. E. Orton and R. D. Anderson, eds. (New York 1998), 395–97.
34. See *Condivi H/E 9; *Condivi-W 9.
35. For a discussion of the currency of the Horatian idea, see Chapter 1, notes 20 and 21. Particularly relevant is the passage from Francisco de Hollanda's *Dialogues in Rome*, in which Michelangelo is credited with the assertion that if the artist were to "exchange the parts or limbs [of animals] (as in grotesque work, which would otherwise be very false and insipid) and convert a griffin or a deer downwards into a dolphin or upwards into any shape he may choose . . . this converted limb . . . will be most perfect according to its nature; and this may seem false but can only be called ingenious or monstrous" (*Diálogos em Roma*, G. D. Folliero-Metz, ed. [Heidelberg, 1998], 109). Whatever the authenticity or non-authenticity of the Master's voice here (on which question, see Laura Camille Agoston, "Michelangelo as Voice vs. Michelangelo as Text," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 36 [2006]: 135–67), a clear connection is made between the artistic exercise of *grotteschi* and a special kind of exemption from the rules of decorum that Horace promulgates at the beginning of the *Ars poetica*—but it is an exemption that Horace himself is made to underwrite. The same set of associations is alive and well when Sidney writes his *Apology for Poetry* and uses Horace to justify the poet's permission to invent "forms such as never were in nature, as the heroes, demi-gods, Cyclops, chimeras, furies, and such like"—examples that owe their origins as much to the practice of visual artists as to that of poets.
36. The poem is G1; see *Residori for a number of echoes from both Dante and Petrarch.
37. For evidence that Michelangelo was interested in tracing his family's origins back to the Counts of Canossa, see the opening of Condivi's biography, where the topic is given much more prominence than it receives in Vasari, as befits the probability that Michelangelo himself played a sizeable role in what Condivi chose to write.
38. **Corpus* 102. See the meticulous description in *Joannides, *Ashmolean*, cat. 4; my own observation confirms his transcriptions and his account of the order in which marks were inscribed on this sheet.
39. The five works whose drafts appear on **Corpus* 102 are G3 ("Grato e felice . . ."), G6 ("Signor, se vero è alcun proverbio antico"), G7 ("Chi è quel che per forza . . ."), G8 ("Come può esser . . ."), and G9 ("Colui che 'l tutto fe . . ."). None of them appears in any other autograph manuscript, or indeed from any source produced within Michelangelo's lifetime. Girardi asserts that these texts are exceptionally difficult to decipher, and perhaps intentionally so: "M[ichelangelo] è ripassato con la penna sopra le parole, inserendo altre lettere tra le lettere che le compongono come se intendesse confonderne la lettura" (*Girardi, 157). My own observation of the sheet does not suggest that the handwriting is more occulted than on many other manuscripts; more on this question in Chapter 7.
40. On this very widely circulated story and its exegeses, which begin with Cicero, *De Inventione*, 2.1.1. and Pliny, *Natural History*, 35.64, see my chapter, "The Heritage of Zeuxis: Painting, Rhetoric, and History" in *Antiquity and Its Interpreters*, A. Payne, A. Kuttner, and R. Smick, eds. (Cambridge 2000), 99–109; see also Elizabeth C. Mansfield, *Too Beautiful to Picture: Zeuxis, Myth, and Mimesis* (Minneapolis, MN 2007).
41. I am obliged to report that Carmen Bambach, supreme connoisseur of the arts on paper, has reported to me that it is unlikely such an effect would have taken place when these sheets were first worked on; I still cherish the notion that a contagion of this kind was possible.

42. *_Corpus_ 25. My own view of this sheet follows very much the readings offered in *Joannides, _Michel-Ange_, cat. 17.
43. The text, as transcribed by Joannides, is: "_questa e 'l mjnore_ | _el quadro ve_ (_v'è? va?_) _pie e tuto questo coe delle facce_." Joannides interprets it as referring to the execution of one of the drawings in a different scale; he opts for the drawing that lies largely outside the rectangle, though, given the placement of the text, it would seem more likely to me that the words refer to the other sketch.
44. It is not certain that this was the artist's consistent intention, given that toward the bottom, where the child's legs cast their shadow, there are some shading lines that break through the rectangle.
45. For a good survey of this later work as a group, which he dates from 1528 onward, see *Hartt, _Drawings_, 249–64.
46. The poem, G20, appears on no other autograph or contemporary sheet. The words appear to be inscribed on the page at more than one sitting; there are also, following Girardi's reading, a couple of re-written passages after the first twenty-four lines, and there is further down the page some material that is indecipherable but still in the same format as the more formally inscribed poem. For a brilliant analysis of the whole burlesque spirit evident in this poem, as well as the Sistine sonnet discussed above in Chapter 3, see *Cambon, 3–18.
47. For an insight into these literary relations, see Danilo Romei, _Berni e i berneschi del Cinquecento_ (Florence 1984), 137–82.
48. For the Italian text, see _La Nencia da Barberino_, R. Bessi, ed. (Rome 1982); for an English translation, see Lorenzo de' Medici, _Selected Poems and Prose_, J. Thiem, ed. (University Park, PA 1991), 183–88. The authorship of the "Nencia" is disputed, with the current tide of opinion going away from Lorenzo; but it is generally agreed that it was composed in a courtly circle, inspired by class-based notions of parody.

6 PRIVATE IN PUBLIC

1. Vasari: "No one should think it strange that Michelangelo delighted in solitude. . . . For all this, he prized the friendship of many great persons and of learned and ingenious men, at convenient times" (*Vasari-deV 2.736, for the original, *Vasari-M 7.270). Condivi's version is "While he was young, then, . . . he all but withdrew from the company of men. . . . He has, however, gladly retained the friendship of those from whose enlightened and learned conversation he could benefit and in whom there shone some ray of excellence" (*Condivi-W 102; for the original, see *Condivi-H/E 59–60). It will be noted in both these passages that there are careful restrictions on the extent of these friendships. Particularly interesting in regard to these questions of sociability is the elaborately self-revealing speech ascribed to Michelangelo in *Giannotti, 66–69, in which he discusses his reasons for refusing an invitation to lunch.
2. For particulars on these statistics, see Chapter 1, note 10.
3. The best place to glimpse the teleological thrust of the _Lives_ is in the preface to Part Three (largely unchanged between the two editions), e.g., "Ma quello che fra i morti e' vivi porta la palma, e trascende e ricuopre tutti, è il divino Michelagnolo Buonarroti . . ." (*Vasari-M 4.13, *Vasari-deV 1.621). For a subtle and witty treatment of the whole Vasari-Michelangelo relation, which has much influenced my reading, see Paul Barolsky, _Michelangelo's Nose: A Myth and Its Maker_ (University Park, PA 1990).
4. *Vasari-M 7.273, *Vasari-deV 2.738.
5. For Vasari on Donatello's disciples, see *Vasari-M 2.423–24, *Vasari-deV 1.376; for Piero di Cosimo's, *Vasari-M 4.144, *Vasari-deV 1.659; for Fra Bartolommeo's, *Vasari-M 4.200–202, *Vasari-deV 1.680; for Parmigianino's, *Vasari-M 5.235–38, *Vasari-deV,1.942–44.
6. See *_Carteggio_ MCIX (4.299), dated 2 May 1548.
7. In regard to questions of unorthodox sexuality, see Condivi's astonishing set of free associations, from Michelangelo's love of the human body, to the unspecified accusations of some dirty-minded persons, to the biographer's own self-admittedly limited knowledge of Plato, to Michelangelo's love of beautiful horses, dogs, plants, forests, etc., to a garbled version of the story concerning Zeuxis and the maidens of Croton (*Condivi-H/E 62; *Condivi-W 105). As for the voice of the Master himself, see Michelangelo's own letter (*_Carteggio_ CXIV [1.150], *Ramsden, cat. 195, of disputed date and addressee), perhaps the single most revealing document regarding at least what he thought others believed about what we would call his sexual orientation. It details an episode in which an unnamed person brings his son to the artist as a potential apprentice under what Michelangelo himself considers the universal assumption that he will pursue the boy into bed. He denies any such intention— "Io vi dicho che rinuntio a questa chonsolatione e non la voglio torre a lui"("I assure you that I'll deny myself that consolation, which I have no wish to filch from him")—but the terms of that declaration are as ambiguous as everything else in the discourse of same-sex desire. For the Aretino letter, see below, note 42.

8. See Cennino Cennini, *Libro dell'arte*, 1.2, which begins with the natural inclination toward *disegno*, but then switches over to deliberate training, when the young artist develops the wish to "trovare maestro e con questo si dispongono con amore d'ubbidienza stando in servitù per venire a perfezion di ciò" (M. Serchi, ed. [Florence 1991], 19).
9. On the subject of Bandinelli's Academy, see *Goffen, *Rivals*, 354–55, and Kathleen Weil-Garris, "Bandinelli and Michelangelo: A Problem in Artistic Identity," in M. Barasch, L. F. Sandler, and P. Egan, eds., *Art, the Ape of Nature: Studies in Honor of H. W. Janson* (New York 1981), 223–51.
10. See *Unearthing the Past*, 290–93.
11. See **Corpus* 237. See as well the exhaustive account of this sheet, including transcription of the texts and a survey of past scholarship in *Joannides, *Ashmolean*, cat. 30. See also *Wallace, "Instruction." Regarding the whole matter of Michelangelo as pedagogue on paper, see two other mutually contrasting approaches: Perrig, *passim*; and Martin Sonnabend, "Michelangelo the Teacher," in *Michelangelo: Zeichnungen und Zuschreibungen/Drawings and Attributions*, exh. cat. (Frankfurt-am-Main 2009), 43–61.
12. See **Corpus* 96. I was greatly aided by the minute account of this sheet in *Joannides, *Ashmolean*, cat. 28, though I have occasionally disagreed with its conclusions. Wallace (see previous note) is also indispensable here, as he is with all these instructional works.
13. See Chapter 1, note 40.
14. See **Corpus* 95. See as well the invaluable entry in *Joannides, *Michel-Ange*, cat. 29.
15. See the comments on the Louvre sheet in *Joannides, *Michel-Ange*, 149: "Ici, comme sur la feuille de l'Ashmolean, les formes idéales deviennent terrifiantes ou grotesques." And, apropos of the Ashmolean sheet, he suggests that Michelangelo was "perhaps warning his pupil(s) of what might befall them if they failed to improve" (*Joannides, *Ashmolean*, 160); he adds a personal communication from Hugo Chapman to the effect that the dragon "might represent Michelangelo mocking his own fearsome reputation, characterising himself as a snarling dragon tying itself in knots."
16. Vasari's specific reference is to a group of works given by Michelangelo to Gherardo Perini (*Vasari-M 7.276, *Vasari-deV 2.740), though I am following others' practice in somewhat expanding the category. See the excellent treatment of this group of works by Creighton Gilbert, "'Un viso quasiche di furia,'" in *Michelangelo Drawings*, C. H. Smyth, ed. (Washington, DC 1992), 212–23. For more on the drawings and the relationship with Perini, see below in this chapter.
17. See **Corpus* 322, also articles by Wallace and Sonnabend cited above in note 11.
18. See Paul Joannides, "On the Recto and on the Verso of a Michelangelo Drawing at Princeton," *The Record of the Art Museum at Princeton University* 54 (1995): 2–11.
19. See *Wilde, *British*, cat. 87; *Chapman, 205; and, for an argument that it is indeed an autograph work, see G. Bonsanti, "Per un riesame del 'Conte di Canossa,'" in *Opere e giorni: Studi su mille anni di arte europea dedicati a Max Seidel*, K. Bergdolt and G. Bonsanti, eds. (Venice 2001), 513–18.
20. See **Corpus* 307. Also see *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 185, and the Gilbert article cited above in note 16.
21. See **Corpus* 316, *Wilde, *British*, cat. 42, and Joannides' entry on a copy of the drawing on the recto in *Michelangelo and His Influence: Drawings from Windsor Castle* (Washington, DC 1998), cat. 2.
22. See **Corpus* 240r. See as well *Wilde, *British*, cat. 31; *Chapman, 193–95; and *Perrig, 24–27. It should be noted as well that the verso contains a lengthy set of autograph spending records (**Ricordi* CXLIX, 157–58) from October of 1524, in addition to what Wilde calls "unintelligible scribbles in black and red chalk," though to my eyes some of them might represent another effort at drawing the Madonna.
23. See above, Figures 2-1, 2-2, 2-12, and 2-13, the latter pair also evidencing the presence of Mini.
24. See *Wilde, *British*, cat. 31, on these questions of handwriting.
25. See, for instance, **Corpus* 84r (Teylers Museum A38Fr), 246v (Louvre 692v), 309r (Casa Buonarroti 3Fr), and 317v (Uffizi 18724F).
26. The letter in question, from Gondi to Michelangelo, is **Carteggio* DXCI (3.3), dated 12 December 1523. See also DXCVII (3.14), of December 1523, which Mini himself writes to Michelangelo saying that he will arrive soon.
27. The exquisitely malicious letter (**Carteggio* DXXVIII [2.313–15]), which dismisses both Urbano's artistic skill ("tutto quello ha lavorato ha storpiato ogni cosa") and his morals ("io ho inteso che lui iocha et de putane le vol tutte, et fa la ninpha con le scarpe de veluto per Roma") is dated 6 September 1521. For other letters reflecting on problems with Urbano's work, see **Carteggio* DXXVI (2.310), DXXX (2.317), DXL (2.328), and DXLIV (2.334), all from 1521. It is noteworthy that the last of this sequence, from a time when the statue had already been unveiled (DXLVIII [2.340], dated 12 January 1522), is written by Leonardo Sellaio, who will be involved in the hiring of Mini. *DeTolnay, *Medici*, 178–79) does a lucid job of sorting through the documents relative to the statue's fortunes in Rome. On the subject of all of Michelangelo's friendships,

particularly with those individuals whom Vasari names in the passage cited at the beginning of this chapter concerning the Master's sociability or non-sociability, see the indispensable annotations in *Barocchi, *Vita*, 4.2053–74.

28. **Carteggio* CDXCIV (2.274–75, from early in 1521); *Ramsden, cat. 149.
29. For letters in which Mini is mentioned as the functionary or go-between, see **Carteggio* DCI (3.19, 7 January 1524), DCXLII (3.103, 29 August 1524) DCXLVI (3.110, 15 October 1524), DCLXIX (3.111, October 1524), and DCCXIX (3.173–74, 25 October 1525).
30. See **Corpus* 314 and *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 366.
31. On the circumstances relative to Mini's uncle, see **Carteggio* DCCCVIII (3.296, 14 January 1531), DCCCXLIII (3.364, 1531 or 1532), DCCCLXVI (3.401, 17 May 1532), and CMXLV (4.72, 1 July 1536); see also the letter reprinted on 3.329. Concerning Mini's various travels with and without Michelangelo's work in hand, see **Carteggio* DCCCXXXV (3.350, 29 November 1531), DCCCXXXVI (3.351–52, 1 December 1531), DCCCXXXIX (3.358–59, 1531), DCCCXLI (3.361, 23 December 1531), DCCCXLIV (3.365–66, 2 January 1532), DCCCXLVI (3.369–70, 11 January 1532), DCCCLII (3.377–79, 27 February 1532), DCCCLIII (3.380–81, 9 March 1532), CMIV (4.8, 20 February 1533), and MXXVII (4.189, 31 August 1544), as well as the letters that are transcribed at 3.340–41 and 4.57–62. For the quotation about chests of models, see *Vasari-deV 2.686, *Vasari-M 7.203.
32. See, for instance, Tommaso Cavalieri's letter to Michelangelo (**Carteggio* DCCCXCVIII [3.445], 1 January 1533), in which he speaks of spending two hours contemplating the drawings that he has received, and the letter from Vittoria Colonna (**Carteggio* CMLXVIII [4.104, 1538–41]) in which she enthuses about the *Crucifixion* that the artist has sent her and raises questions about whether it is by his hand or someone else's.
33. For Mini's significance as the bearer into France of Michelangelo's work on paper, see *Joannides, *Michel-Ange*, 43–46 and *passim*.
34. For the five-year-old's father, see *Wallace, "Instruction," 116. On the attribution fortunes of the "*Cleopatra*," see *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 133, and *Dussler, cat. 409. On the *Labors of Hercules*, no less an authority than Panofsky attributed the work to Mini ("Kopie oder Falschung? Ein Beitrag zur Kritik einiger Zeichnungen aus der Werkstatt Michelangelos," *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst* 61 [1927–28]: 221–44), in an elaborate argument involving the deliberate disguise of both drawing and handwriting styles. For an attribution to Mini of the Louvre portrait drawing (*Joannides, *Michel-Ange*, cat. R27), long credited to Michelangelo himself but generally now attributed either to Bandinelli or Bugiardini, see Ernst Heimeran, *Michelangelo und das Porträt* (Munich 1925), 59–60, 100–101. See also note 41 below for an attribution of the three *teste divine* in the Uffizi to Mini.
35. For the *Madonna lactans*, see **Corpus* 239 and *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 121. On the subject of possible destination Madonnas for these drawings, see *Wilde, *British*, cat. 31, and *Dussler, cat. 149.
36. *Wilde, *British*, cat. 59, gives a clear summary of the artist's connections with Quaratesi in his discussion of the portrait that Michelangelo drew of him. The **Carteggio* includes four letters from Quaratesi (DCCCV [3.292], 24 November 1530; DCCCXVIII [3.314], 22 June 1531; DCCCLXV [3.400], 14 May 1532; and DCCCLXXXIX [3.431], July–August 1532), with a recurrent emphasis on excusing his absences from Michelangelo's company. The letter from Michelangelo to Quaratesi (DCCCLXXVI [3.413], June 1532), includes on its verso the text of G65, "In quel medesmo tempo ch'io vi adoro" ("During the very time that I adore you"), and it includes the verse "Ben ama chi ben arde" ("He truly loves who truly burns").
37. See *Joannides, *Ashmolean*, 158–59.
38. See above, note 34.
39. See **Corpus* 70 and *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 131. On Michelangelo's early sketches of putti, see above, Chapter 5. Donatello's highly influential *cantorie* featured a little phalanx of cavorting putti; for a description of them and a comparison with the parallel piece executed by Luca della Robbia, see *Vasari-M 2.170–71 and 2.401–2).
40. See Perini's letters to Michelangelo (**Carteggio* DL [2.342], DLIX [2.352], and DLX [2.353]), all from 1522. Michelangelo's letter to him is to be found in **Carteggio* DLI (2.343, February 1522).
41. *Vasari-deV 2.740; for the original, see *Vasari-M 7.276. For the three drawings in question, all of which are in the Uffizi, see **Corpus* 306, 307, 308, as well as *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 185, 186, 187. *Perrig, 127n93, believes all three of the Uffizi sheets to be copies by Mini.
42. Aretino suggests that there is a great deal of sinister gossip going around, which could be erased if only Michelangelo would give him some drawings, "da che in cotale atto acquetavate la invidia, che vuole che non vi possin disporre se non Gherardi et Tomai." The letter is to be found in **Carteggio* MXLV (4.215–17), November 1545.

43. It is interesting that one of the *teste divine* (**Corpus* 308) includes the statement "Gherardo io non ò potuto oggi ve[nire]"; in fact, letters from all of these people are frequently about visiting or not visiting Michelangelo.
44. The text appears at *Familiares* 11.4; citation is from Francesco Petrarca, *Le Familiari*, V. Rossi, ed. (Florence 1997), 2.331. Translation is mine. For instances of the poem's appearance next to the *Rime*, see, for instance, Bodleian MS 25401; for printed editions, see Klaus Ley et al., *Die Drucke von Petrarcas "Rime"* (Hildesheim 2002), cat. 0003, 0007, 0008, 0016, 0043.
45. See Nicholas Turner, Lee Hendrix, and Carol Plazzotta, *European Drawings 3: Catalogue of the Collections* (Los Angeles 1997), cat. 28. See also Michael Hirst, "A Further Addendum to the Michelangelo *Corpus*," *Burlington Magazine* 126 (1984): 91.
46. For an essay that connects this poem with the Latin poem that appeared on the Uffizi sheet with putti, see Pierre Blanc, "Poétique des lieux pétrarquiens: 'Vallis clausa, ad fontem Sorgiae,'" *Chroniques italiennes* 41 (1995): 5–18.
47. See **Corpus* 312 as well as *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 368. The poem in question is G46, "Quand'el ministro de' sospir mie tanti"; see *Girardi, 201 for a discussion of the textual issues.
48. See **Corpus* 296, and, for the complete transcription and an account of attributions, see *Joannides, *Michel-Ange*, cat. 51.
49. See *Joannides, *Ashmolean*, 168: "Surprisingly, the poem was penned before the drawings were made, as de Tolnay pointed out."
50. For previous discussion of this text, see above, Chapter 5.
51. The poem appears as G51; my citation of the text is from *Girardi. See *Residori for the dense intertextual reverberations from Petrarch.
52. See **Corpus* 57 as well as *Wilde, *British*, cat. 23, who gives a complete account of the paper trail surrounding this page, as well as of the actual composite that makes up the page; also see *Chapman, 159. For those working on the sequence of ideas for the Julius Tomb (e.g., *Dussler, cat. 152, and *Hartt, *Drawings*, cat. 126, 127), this sheet contains important (if enigmatic) information. For a fuller argument about Michelangelo's architectural drawing, including this sheet, see Caroline Elam, "Funzione, tipo e ricezione dei disegni di architettura di Michelangelo," in *Michelangelo e il disegno di architettura*, C. Elam, ed. (Venice 2006), 43–73. My thinking throughout this section of the book has been incalculably aided by the classic work in this field, James S. Ackerman's *The Architecture of Michelangelo* (Harmondsworth, Eng. 1970), and by the very recent appearance of Cammy Brothers' *Michelangelo, Drawing, and the Invention of Architecture* (New Haven, CT 2008).
53. See **Corpus* 508r and *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 46.
54. A similar kind of *Ding an sich* status can be accorded to those sheets that served as templates, e.g., **Corpus* 204 (*Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 93) and 534 (*Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 64), both of which contain quite straightforward descriptions in Michelangelo's hand stating exactly the purpose of the template, e.g., "el modano delle colonne della sepultura di sagrestia." But this sort of straightforward utility did not prevent Michelangelo from using the template to compose quite passionate poetry, as we saw in Chapter 2 (see Figures 2-21, 2-22). On the subject of these sorts of sheets, see the indispensable readings offered by *Wallace, "Drawings."
55. See **Corpus* 260 and the very extensive tracings of both the architectural and the religious subject matter in *Joannides, *Ashmolean*, cat. 38.
56. E.g., **Corpus* 196 (*Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 314), 286 (*Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 351), 584 (*Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 347), and 599 (*Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 357).
57. E.g., **Corpus* 178 (*Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 313), 187 (*Joannides, *Ashmolean*, cat. 25), 205 (*Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 67), 524 (*Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 80), 559 (*Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 87), and 579 (*Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 113).
58. See **Corpus* 562 and *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 354. This very heavily revised madrigal, which appears as G81 and Ga29, is discussed in all its complicated history of revision by *Cambon, 137–50. The letter appears as **Carteggio* CMVIII (4.14–15), 1533; it is hopelessly mutilated near the beginning, where the topic seems to have something to do with domestic animals, but the later part, with phrases like "perché il core è veramente la casa dell'anima, e essendo prima il mio nelle mani di colui a chi voi l'anima mia avete dacta, natural forza era di ritornarlla al luogo suo," appears to be focusing on his love for Cavalieri.
59. For the St. Peter's sheet, see **Corpus* 601r, and Joannides, **Ashmolean*, cat. 54, which discusses Michelangelo's habit of sketching different architectural projects on the same sheets; the entry also touches upon the evidences of the artist's uncertainty as regards the form that he wishes the work to take. For the cornice sheet, see **Corpus* 358v and *Wilde, *British*, cat. 70. It should be noted that the figure drawing on

the recto, of a kneeling man, whether it is related to the *Last Judgment* or to the frescoes in the Pauline Chapel (both of which possibilities have been proposed), has no connection to any of the architectural work on the verso. The sentiment expressed in the letter fragment, whereby Michelangelo disclaims professional ability, is familiar from his whole career, beginning with the painting of the Sistine Ceiling about which he is quoted in the Condivi biography as saying "non era mia arte" (*Condivi, H/E 33–34; *Condivi-W 57). Some years before the assertion that "non sono architector," he writes a letter to Fattucci (**Carteggio* DCII [3.20], January 1524), apropos of a request that he design the Laurentian Library, saying that he will do what he can, "benché non sia mia professione." It is worth noting that on the same sheet he wrote two verses (Ga24) about Daedalus rousing himself, borrowing the phrase from *Purgatorio*, 9.34, where it is, however, Achilles who rouses himself. Daedalus, who constructed the Labyrinth, was considered the mythological Ur-architect.

60. For the sheet with the letter to Fantuzzi, see **Corpus* 626v and *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, 208. The poetic excerpt, beginning "Signiore, io fallo e veggio el mio. . . ." published as Ga31 (see textual commentary at*Girardi, 478), is closely modeled on Petrarch, *Rime* 236, with the addressee switching from *Amore* to *Signore*. For the mule driver sheet, see **Corpus* 595v and *Dussler, cat. 301.
61. For extensive and highly informative accounts of these drawings, see **Corpus* 441–87 and *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 292–311 and 317–29 (especially the entry under 317). Once again, *Wallace, "Instruction" is a persuasive guide.
62. See **Corpus* 619r and *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 169. For this phase of Michelangelo's drawing, see *Hirst, *Drawings*, 83–88, and Brothers, *Michelangelo*, 165–81.
63. See **Corpus* 449r and *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 300. So far as perspective is concerned, it is worth recollecting the comment attributed to the artist in the postille composed (probably) by Tiberio Calcagni in response to Condivi's biography: "Alla prospettiva no, ché mi pareva perdervi troppo tempo" (*Condivi H/E XXII).
64. If Michelangelo's poems are already the stepchildren of his oeuvre, the fifty epitaphs for Cecchino Bracci find themselves all but abandoned on the church steps. *Symonds (290–93), despite his nuanced understanding of Michelangelo's friendship network, had little taste for these poetic evidences of it, and a recent very good English language treatment of the poetry (*Ryan, *Introduction*), while offering an excellent reading of the self-dismissive context in which the poems were circulated, relegates the works themselves to a marginal status. Useful background for the circumstances and the relationships can be found in *Residori, 303; in *Ramsden, 2.244–50, 256–58; in Franz Voelker, "I cinquanta componimenti funebri di Michelangelo per Luigi del Riccio," *Italique* 3 (2001): 23–44; and in A. J. Smith, "For the Death of Cecchino Bracci," *Modern Language Review* 58 (1963): 355–63. See also the chapter in *Clements, *Poetry*, 134–53. Ernst Steinmann, *Michelangelo e Luigi del Riccio* (Florence 1932), provides valuable documentation. In the end, as with many other topics in Michelangelo's life, most valuable of all by way of context are the relevant letters in the **Carteggio*: CMLXIII (4.98), 1538–39; CMXCIX (4.146–47), 1542; MVII (4.164), 1543; MXIX (4.178), 1544; MXXV (4.187), 1544; and MXLVI (4.220), December 1545.
65. These various self-effacements are reprinted in Italian in *Residori and in English in *Saslow; see notes to G192, G193, G196, G197, G211, and G228.
66. For the food-centered messages, see notes (originals in the Residori edition and translations in both the Ryan and the Saslow editions) to G194 (trout and truffles), G198 (pickled mushrooms), G199 (fennel), G201 (trout), G206 (unspecified delicacies), and G223 (*berlingozzi* and *berriquocoli*).
67. See note to G193.
68. The standard work on the subject, mostly concerned with visual production, is Christoph L. Frommel, *Michelangelo und Tommaso Cavalieri* (Amsterdam 1979). As on many other subjects that are covered in Vasari's *Life*, the fullest account of the literature, both contemporary and later, is offered by Paola Barocchi's exhaustive annotations (*Barocchi, *Vita*, 4.1882–1906). See as well the excellent summary of the materials in *Ryan, *Introduction*, 94–128. *Perrig, 75–85, has his own agenda but nevertheless offers some interesting arguments about the nature of the relationship from the point of view of artistic production. For discussions of the relationship in connection with questions concerning homosexuality, see the next two notes.
69. The letters from Michelangelo to Cavalieri are: **Carteggio* DCCCXCVIII (3.443–44), DCCCXCIX (4.1), and CM (4.3), all from January of 1533, the latter two being separate drafts of the same letter; and CMXVI (4.26), CMXVII (4.28), and CMXVIII (4.28), all from July of 1533. The letters from Cavalieri to Michelangelo are DCCCXCVIII (3. 445), 1 January 1533; CMXIX (4.30), 2 August 1533; and CMXXXII (4.49), 6 September 1533. All of these communications—and equally, the letters from Sebastiano del Piombo and Bartolommeo Angiolini, who formed a sort of friendship circle around the two men—deserve careful attention. In a relationship that we know to have lasted thirty years (since Cavalieri was present in 1564, when Michelangelo was dying), it is significant that all these documents come from the very first months of the friendship, and

doubtless that limits our ability to assess the full scope of their story. That having been said, we can learn a great deal from a close reading of what we've got. Partly, this four-person circle was necessitated by practical circumstances of geography. Michelangelo was in Florence and the other three in Rome, so a certain amount of attention is given to how well the grapes and pomegranates are doing in Michelangelo's Roman residence, etc. Another part of the commerce, though, is in letters and poems: Michelangelo seems to have sent both types of written matter not only directly to Cavalieri but also via the other two friends. And both sorts of text involve what appear to be a quite open acknowledgement that there was an especially tender bond between Michelangelo and Cavalieri which was as well a fragile one. On one occasion, for instance (CMXXXV [4.53–54], 4 October 1533), a sonnet (unidentified) is sent to Angiolini, presumably for distribution to Cavalieri. Angiolini reads it, reports to Michelangelo that he doesn't understand it, and declares that to be perfectly all right since it is after all intended for Cavalieri. He goes on, however, to say that he has written his own bad sonnet (*sonnettaccio*) in response, because he does not believe that love has treated Michelangelo as badly as the artist's sonnet seems to suggest. This is not just about Angiolini's ignorance as regards Petrarchan conventions. Rather, this assertion—here implicit, but in other letters quite out in the open—is part of an on-going effort to convince Michelangelo (apparently with some difficulty) that Cavalieri really cares for him; as for instance when the same correspondent reassures Michelangelo (CMXV [4.25], 26 July 1533), "non vi ama mancho che vi amiate voi lui." The language between the two principals themselves is capable of being a little bit more direct. Cavalieri repeats his wish that Michelangelo return to Rome as soon as possible, while Michelangelo writes several drafts of a statement about being as likely to forget Cavalieri's name as he would be to forget the food he lives on (CMXVI [4.26–27], 28 July 1533).

70. Needless to say, the relationship between Michelangelo and Cavalieri has been a flashpoint for scholarly and biographical agendas concerning same-sex desire. Among those whose accounts are marred by an insistence that there was no erotic connection of any kind between the two men is *Ramsden (1.xlvi–lii), generally a goldmine of biographical documentation but in this case somewhat unreliable. In certain respects, the most creditable account remains that of *Symonds; also valuable is James Saslow, "'A Veil of Ice between My Heart and the Fire': Michelangelo's Sexual Identity and Early Modern Constructs of Homosexuality," *Genders* 2 (1988): 77–90. For an appealingly non-dogmatic psychoanalytic view, see Robert S. Liebert, M.D., *Michelangelo: A Psychoanalytic Study of His Life and Images* (New Haven, CT 1983), 270–311. The particular case of these two individuals needs to be set in a multi-layered historical context that can sort out Platonism, patriarchy, oppression, repression, and the relations between desire and the language used to express desire—a scholarly act that is not easy to perform. Milestones in this effort, not specifically concerning Michelangelo, include the following: John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago 1980); David Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York 1990); and Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (New York 1996). See also my own *Transuming Passion: Ganymede and the Erotics of Humanism* (Stanford, CA 1991). A personal favorite of mine as regards this problematic methodological territory is Claude Summers, "Homosexuality and Renaissance Literature, or the Anxieties of Anachronism," *South Central Review* 9 (1992): 2–23.
71. **Carteggio* CM 4.3, dated 1 January 1533. Translation is from *Complete Poems and Selected Letters of Michelangelo*, C. Gilbert, trans., R. Linscott, ed. (Princeton, NJ 1980), 253.
72. See Plato, *Phaedrus* 275d–e.
73. **Carteggio* CMXXXII 4.49, dated 6 September 1533.
74. For the original Phaëthon text, see Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2.1–303. The charioteer story appears in *Phaedrus* 246a–56e.
75. Questions of iconography, and of the order in which they were produced, have been bracketed in this discussion. On the individual drawings, see **Corpus* 340 (British Museum), 342 (Venice Accademia), 343 (Windsor Castle). On the group as a whole, see *Hirst, *Drawings*, 113–15; and *Rosand, 197–200. For the British Museum version, see *Wilde, *British*, cat. 55; *Chapman, 224–27; and *Perrig, 39, 65–66. On the Venice drawing, see Cristina Acidini et al., *The Medici, Michelangelo, and the Art of Late Renaissance Florence* (New Haven, CT 2002), cat. 189. On the Windsor version, see A. E. Popham and Johannes Wilde, *The Italian Drawings of the XV and XVI Centuries . . . at Windsor Castle* (London 1949), cat. 430; Joannides, *Michelangelo and His Influence*, exh. cat. (National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC 1997), cat. 9; and *Perrig, 45–46.
76. See, for instance, *Perrig, 75–85.

1. Near the end of the Condivi biography (*Condivi-H/E 61, 66; *Condivi-W 103–5, 109), there is a paragraph devoted to Michelangelo's taste in writers and to his own efforts at poetic composition, mixing praise ("alcuni sonnetti . . . che danno bonissimo saggio della grande invenzione e giudizio suo") with disclaimer ("Ma a questo ha atteso più per suo diletto che perché egli ne faccia professione"). The *Life* closes with the (unfulfilled) promise to publish a selection of the poems, "quali io con lungo tempo ho raccolti sì da lui sì da altri," singling out the literary work for its *invenzione* and *concetti*, which appear to be code words for the kind of difficulty and originality that readers have always found in Michelangelo's writing. Vasari, in his 1568 edition (*Vasari-M 229, 246, 274–75, *Vasari-deV 2.705, 718, 739), publishes complete versions of two sonnets, G277 ("Se con lo stile") and G285 ("Giunto è già 'l corso"), both of which were sent to him personally, as well as quoting the opening of G151 ("Non ha l'ottimo artista"), but in general he seems less engaged in the poetry than Condivi, construing it more as a subset of Michelangelo's taste in reading and of his friendship network than as a set of artistic products per se. So far as the funeral tributes are concerned, there is much poetry written by others about Michelangelo's artwork, but Poetry in reference to him makes its only appearance in a sculptural group alongside allegorical representations of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture. The text of the *Esequie* slightly segregates this literary personification: "La quarta con la cetra in mano, & con l'habito di Calliope, era benissimo conosciuta per la Poesia; poiche questo eccellen. Artefice ha lasciato al mondo frutti non solo delle divine mani, ma ancora del suo acutissimo intelletto, cioè composizioni piene di gravità e d'ingegno" (*The Divine Michelangelo*, R. and M. Wittkower, eds. [London 1964], 100–101). This set of code words—*gravità* and *ingegno*—point in a similar direction to those of Condivi. It is worth noting that sixty years later, when Michelangelo's great-nephew and namesake is constructing a shrine in the Casa Buonarroti closely based on these memorials, he adds a representation of *Michelangelo con la Poesia*, designed by Cristofano Allori and executed by Zanobi Rosi (see Adriaan W. Vliegenthart, *La Galleria Buonarroti: Michelangelo e Michelangelo il Giovane* [Florence 1976], 138–42). Not coincidentally, it is this same relative who publishes the first collected edition of the poetry (*Le Rime di Michelagnolo Buonarroti raccolte da Michelagnolo suo nipote*) in 1623, containing less than half the oeuvre as we now construe it, and, even for what it does contain, famously bowdlerized and rewritten. What is perhaps even more astonishing than the six decades between Michelangelo's death and this first publication is that it took another 240 years before anyone went back to the original manuscripts and published a new text, that being the work of Cesare Guasti (*Le Rime di Michelangelo Buonarroti* [Florence 1863]). For a good overview of the critical fortunes of the poetry within and beyond the early modern period, see Enzo Noè Girardi, *Studi su Michelangiolo scrittore* (Florence 1974), 177–205.
2. Benedetto Varchi's work can be found in Paola Barocchi, *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento, fra manierismo e Controriforma* (Bari 1960), 1.3–82. The best work in English on the subject is Leatrice Mendelsohn, *Paragoni: Benedetto Varchi's* Due lezzioni *and Cinquecento Art Theory* (Ann Arbor, MI 1981). It should be noted as well that there were other signs of enthusiastic contemporary reception for Michelangelo's verses, at least within certain coteries, including some early madrigal settings and an often quoted statement by Francesco Berni, who hailed Michelangelo as an "Apollo Apelle" and praised him at the expense of his fellow artist and occasional poet Sebastiano del Piombo, whom he addressed, saying "ei dice cose, e voi dite parole" ("he says things, and you say words"; the full text is printed in *Girardi, 261–63).
3. For previous discussions of this group, see above, Chapters 1 and 6.
4. On the question of what purposes were served by the compilation we know as Vat. lat. 3211, see the contrasting views of, on the one hand, Roberto Fedi, "'L'imagine vera: Vittoria Colonna, Michelangelo e un'idea di canzoniere," *MLN* 107 (1992): 46–73, and *La Memoria della poesia: Canzonieri, lirici e libri di rime nel rinascimento* (Rome 1990), 264–305, and, on the other hand, Lucia Ghizzoni, "Indagine sul 'canzoniere' di Michelangelo," *Studi di filologia italiana* 49 (1991): 167–87. For the further publication history, and the editor Carl Frey's place within it, see below, note 11.
5. As is clear from the extensive textual materials in *Girardi (483–547) and from a number of sheets discussed in the present volume, Vat. lat. 3211 is certainly not the only reliable source for the poetry, nor even the only extensive set of autograph texts. Notable in this regard is a Florentine MS (Archivio Buonarroti Codice XIII), for which see *Girardi, 485–87. Like the Vatican MS, it contains a number of sheets with drawings, including some discussed in these pages; e.g., the rebus of the Crow (see Figures 3-10, 3-11), the Sistine Sonnet (see Figure 3-14), and the template with poetry and counting devices on it (see Figures 2-21, 2-22); and, again like the Vatican MS, it includes a mixture of work in Michelangelo's own hand alongside copies by others. As Girardi points out, its importance is that it covers a period of writing earlier than that upon which the Vatican MS concentrates: essentially, it represents a Florentine stemma, with autograph materials prior to Michelangelo's final departure for Rome in 1534, and it remained after his death within the Buonarroti family. Yet even though this manuscript's origins are earlier, it appears in the form we possess it to be more a work

of subsequent compilation than is the case with Vat. lat. 3211, and hence somewhat less susceptible to consideration as an object in itself.

6. See the detailed description in *Girardi, 483–85. Orsini (1529–1600) was a librarian, a humanist, author of a text of portraiture iconography, and an associate of El Greco. When Michelangelo's great-nephew undertook to publish the poetry in the 1620s, he gained access to the Orsini papers, thus enabling him to do composite work on both the Roman and the Florentine sources.
7. For the special qualities of this late phase in Michelangelo's life, see Howard Hibbard, *Michelangelo* (New York 1974), 239–312, and Leo Steinberg, *Michelangelo's Last Paintings* (London 1975), esp. 7–16.
8. Regarding this vast and speculative material, see the lucid introduction to the subject in Andrew Bennett, *The Author* (London 2005), as well as the grander syntheses in Roger Chartier, *Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer* (Philadelphia 1995).
9. For the many drawings that we now associate with the Cascina project, see **Corpus* 22–54; for examples of drawings for fortification, see **Corpus* 563–83.
10. For the record, poems that appear in two or more versions on Vat. lat. 3211 are: G106, G123, G124, G146, G150, G162, G174, G235, G236, G239, G243, G255, G256, G259, G262, G272, G276, G285, G288, G289, G290, G294, and G296. For the many drafts of G106, see *Girardi, 286–91.
11. As mentioned above in note 1, the publication history of Michelangelo's poetry begins badly, first with nothing and then with a highly unreliable version that stands alone for a quarter millennium. For the sequence of editions from Cesare Guasti (1863) to Carl Frey (1897), which turned into a competition between Italian and German philological methods, see *Girardi, 509–29. Regarding Girardi's place in this lineage—and it is an illustrious one—his own account (*Girardi, 529–47) is splendidly self-explanatory. For the purposes of the present chapter, it is important not only to point out the excellence of Girardi's work in the face of the extraordinary complexity of original materials, but also to suggest that a new critical edition is desperately needed. In the half-century since Girardi's edition appeared, there have been many developments in textual criticism. The full scope of this movement is beyond our present concern (see, for instance, the work of Jerome McGann, e.g., *The Textual Condition* [Princeton, NJ 1991] or the essays in *Voice, Text, Hypertext: Emerging Practices in Textual Studies*, R. Modiano, L. F. Searle, and P. Shillingsburg, eds. [Seattle 2004]); but suffice it to say that there has been considerable challenge to the notion of a single, definitive, best, and final version of authors' works that represents their truest intentions. The best editors have, of course, always understood the labile nature of their archive, but in recent years this multiplicity has been more fully embraced. All of which is supremely relevant to such a radical palimpsest as is embodied in the drafts of Michelangelo's poetry; and the kind of attention to the material qualities of manuscript that I attempt in this chapter necessarily opens questions about any edition of his work—and there are many, both in Italian and in translation—that accepts unquestioningly Girardi's decisions (however unexceptionable) as to what should count as a Michelangelo poem.
12. As a number of close analyses—applied both to the poems as they stand and to the process of their evolution—will occupy most of the rest of this chapter, the present note will provide some general indicators of the scholarly and interpretive context in which I have approached the poetry here; I will therefore not footnote each poem as regards its particular history of interpretation. So far as editions are concerned, Girardi (cited constantly in these notes) is the indispensable authority, but he does not provide explanatory notes, except on textual matters, instead producing synopses that are often quite illuminating. As regards more conventionally annotated editions, by all odds the most valuable is that of *Residori. The two most recent English translations (both with Italian on facing pages) of the complete Girardi canon—*Saslow and *Ryan, Translation—are both excellent in their rendition of Michelangelo's difficult language and in their explanatory apparatus. Saslow's introduction is an invaluable source on Michelangelo's life and work, as well as on the language and literary traditions that underlie his poetic achievement; in his treatment of sexuality, Saslow is masterful, a genuine inheritor of J. A. Symonds, who remains both pioneer and benchmark for this complex topic. Ryan, for his part, has produced a first-rate volume separate from his edition (*Ryan, *Introduction*), whose subtitle is too modest, given the clarity and scholarly depth of the work. Girardi's critical books on the poetry (*Studi sulle rime di Michelangiolo* [Milan 1964] and *Studi su Michelangiolo scrittore* [Florence 1974]; their contents overlap) are exemplary both for their own readings and for their assessment of the history of reading Michelangelo. Given that my interests in the analyses that follow are focused partly on the intensity in the poetic affect in these works and partly on the compulsive activity of revision, it should be clear that my strongest inspiration was *Cambon, whose two principal chapters, "Protean Eros" and "Fury of Form," cover similar territory to mine, though with less focus on the material conditions of the text. His description of the process whereby, in his lovely expression, "erotic fervor has become fury of form" (137), could serve as motto for my chapter as well.

13. A note on translations in this chapter. Wherever I cite poems in their official modern published form (that is, using Girardi's text, as throughout the present volume), I use Christopher Ryan's English translations, as in previous chapters. For alternative versions in the manuscripts, on the other hand, no English translation exists; hence, I have produced my own renderings. It should be noted on all these occasions, of course, that Michelangelo's language is extremely challenging, and never more so than in some of his manuscript notations that did not find their way into what we consider the standard form of the poems. Clearly, his unfinished thoughts—if that is what they are—are even more elliptical than his more polished utterances, and possibly contain meaning only for him, just as is the case with many of his fragmentary visual sketches. Hence *any* reading of the words, especially when transferred into another language, must be regarded as provisional; and I hope I have remained appropriately tentative in the analytic conclusions I have drawn in regard to these poetic fragments.
14. Such a reading is implicit in Girardi's synopsis; *Saslow, 434, makes it explicit: "The theme of a painfully unattractive woman is unique, since M habitually idealizes those he loves."
15. See, for instance, the revealing set of original texts reprinted under the chapter heading "Platonic Dialogues" in *The Columbia Anthology of Gay Literature*, B.R.S. Fone, ed. (New York 1998), 125–56. See also the lively and informative essay by Giovanni dall'Orto, "'Socratic Love' as a Disguise for Same-Sex Love in the Italian Renaissance," in *The Pursuit of Sodomy: Male Homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe*, K. Gerard and G. Hekma, eds. (London 1989), 33–66.
16. See Ovid's Pygmalion story (*Metamorphoses*, 10.286); translated as " . . . becomes usable through use itself," the phrase refers to the fact that Pygmalion's love is able to effect a transformation in the stony statue by using it as though it were a living thing, thus making it into a living thing. See my discussion of this principle in *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven, CT 1986), 77, 92.
17. See the discussion of this sheet in Chapter 1, Figure 1-24.
18. The same phrase finds its way in far smaller writing onto another sheet, fol. 67v, underneath yet a different sonnet draft. See the very enlightening discussion of this topos, and its mode of construing the figure of Vittoria Colonna, in *Cambon, 67–70.
19. On this poem and its contexts, see *Ryan, *Introduction*, 205–13. On this and other much-reworked poems, see the sensitive discussion devoted to Michelangelo's patterns of revision in *Cambon, 128–76.
20. Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, *Inferno*, 5.117, trans. C. S. Singleton (Princeton, NJ 1970).
21. See **Corpus* 423, and *Dussler, cat. 230.
22. This is presumably not the sestet of the poem whose octave is to be found on the recto. It appears in Girardi's text in the form of a separate fragmentary poem (G284).
23. On all these drawings, see *deTolnay, Vaticanus.
24. The hypothesis of an *Agony in the Garden* is offered by *Hartt, *Drawings*, cat. 448–50; he prudently concludes by saying, "More caution is indicated regarding the connection of these little figures with any known work."
25. On the sheet with the columns, see *deTolnay, Vaticanus, 184–87; on the candelabrum sheet, see *Dussler, cat. 217.
26. On this sheet, see **Corpus* 526 and *Dussler, cat. 225.
27. Indicative of the issues that arise when assigning architectural drawings to finished work are the energetic efforts in this direction of *Hartt, *Drawings*, 342–70.
28. The letter appears as **Carteggio* MCCXIII (5.43): "[Di]ricto, e la [parte] mezzo aovata, intendo per Signior[e]; le parte da canto pe' servi andando a veder la liberria. Le rivolte di decte alia dal mezzo in sù, insino al riposo di decta scala, s'appichano col muro; dal mezzo in giù, insino in sul pavimento, decta sala si discosta dal muro circa quactro palmi, in modo che l'inbasamento del ricecto non è offeso in luogo nessuno e atorno actorno resta libero. E a me par sogniare una simil cosa, e confidomi in voi che, per servire il Duca, Vostra Signoria et messer Bartolomeo troveranno cose per decta scala che non sono le mia." The translation is from *Ramsden, 2.213. See the extensive entries concerning the letter and the accompanying drawings at **Corpus* 526 and *Dussler, cat. 225.
29. On the form and history of this remarkable structure, see Rudolf Wittkower's painstakingly documented narrative in "Michelangelo's Biblioteca Laurenziana," *Art Bulletin* 16 (1934): 123–218, as well as the relevant chapter in James S. Ackerman, *The Architecture of Michelangelo* (Harmondsworth, Eng. 1970), 97–122.
30. The Vasari letter, which the **Carteggio* (MCCXV [5.47]) dates 28 September 1555, appears to be a more polished form of the same communication as the draft; see the **Carteggio* entry for its textual pedigree. For an English translation, see *Ramsden, 2.157–59. For the version in Vasari, see *Vasari-M 7.237, *VasarideV 2.711–12. The letter to Ammannati, which accompanied the model, is also preserved only in a copy; see

*_Carteggio_ MCCLXXXIV (5.151) and *Ramsden, 2.186. There is also a letter from Michelangelo to his nephew Leonardo (*_Carteggio_ MCCXIV [5.45], *Ramsden, 2.156–57), inside which the Vasari letter was enclosed; Michelangelo tells his nephew that he has left the Vasari letter open so that Leonardo can read it: clearly, he was consciously disseminating his ideas, at least in part, one presumes, so as to lay a stronger claim on them.

31. The generally infallible *Girardi, 470, mistakenly asserts that the letter on fol. 87 was written to Ammannati, which is not possible, since he is referred to in the third person, as an individual distinct from the addressee; Saslow copies this mistake. Both the *Carteggio* and Ramsden list Vasari as the recipient, however.
32. "Mi ritorna bene nella mente come un sognio una certa iscala, ma non credo che sia a punto quella che io pensai allora, perché mi torna cosa goffa, pure la scriverò qui" (*_Carteggio_ 5.47–48; translation, *Ramsden, 2.157).
33. "Io gli ne do notitia, come per un sognio, di quel poco ch'i' mi posso ricordare" (*_Carteggio_ 5.45).
34. "Io scrivo cosa da ridere, ma so bene che messer Bartolomeo e voi troverete cosa al proposito" (*_Carteggio_ 5.49).
35. "Degli adornamenti, base e cimase a que' zoccoli et altre cornicie, non bisogna che io ve ne parli, perché siate valente e, essendo nel luogo, molto meglio vedrete il bisogno che non fo io" (5.151).
36. See *_Carteggio_ 5.43, which explains the anomaly by suggesting that the draft was written at the earlier date but then re-dated at the time when the full letter was sent to Vasari; having offered this possibility, the note ends with "La soluzione adottata si accompagna tuttavia con qualche perplessità." Whatever the truth of the matter, it is worth noting that this particular gap is relatively brief, considering that discussions and drawings relative to the Library had been going on for something approaching thirty years.
37. In fact, this particular inscription is frequently not credited to Michelangelo, e.g., in the *_Carteggio_; but I can see no reason why this one marking, which so resembles those around it, should be uniquely excluded from all the rest of the autograph material on the page.
38. See above, Chapter 6.
39. *Vasari-M 7.276, *Vasari-deV 2.740. This sense of danger in being tied to others appears constantly in any discourse by Michelangelo or his contemporaries that concerns itself with his problematic sociability; see, for instance, his refusal of a luncheon invitation in *Giannotti, discussed above in Chapter 1.
40. *_Purgatorio_*, 1.1–2. Citation is to Singleton, ed., as above in note 20. See *Cambon, 195–96, on this allusion, which he associates with Vasari's own literary culture: "Michelangelo is talking to another connoisseur of Dante and expects him to catch the allusion and share the fun."
41. The classic treatment of this material is Edgar Wind, *_Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance_* (Harmondsworth, Eng. 1967), 26–52. For the Seneca material, see *_On Benefits_*, 1.3.
42. This troubling mechanism of indebtedness plays itself out for Michelangelo in regard to heavenly grace as well—particularly insofar as that grace might be figured or embodied in a person. Vittoria Colonna fits perfectly into this model, since she possesses *_grazia_* at the same time as she can be construed as his intermediary in relation to heavenly grace, a role prepared by Dante's Beatrice. See, for instance, G159 and G160. Furthermore, as Alexander Nagel has brilliantly demonstrated ("Gifts for Michelangelo and Vittoria Colonna," *_Art Bulletin_* 79 [1997]: 647–68), a culture of gift-giving, beginning on the earthly plane, is a defining feature of their friendship. For larger contexts as regards gifts, see Marcel Mauss, *_The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies_* (New York, 2000 reprint) and Natalie Zemon Davis, *_The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France_* (Madison, WI 2000).
43. On this sheet, see *_Corpus_* 356, and *deTolnay, Vaticanus, 175–76, 188–92. See also *Dussler, cat. 226.
44. See *deTolnay, Vaticanus in previous note.
45. See *Girardi, 427–30, for a chronological reconstruction of the drafts. As in most other cases, I find his timeline convincing, though there is no hard evidence outside one's reading of the texts themselves. It is important in all these cases where there are pieces of writing adjacent to drawings, each of which can be assigned a date only speculatively, that we not forget the extent to which one hypothesis rests on another, with little or no point of certainty in the whole construction.
46. Indeed, this draft is so far from blunt that several of the lines (particularly the clause that begins "si questa età") are quite impenetrable. The final statement, however, makes its point rather directly.
47. See my *_Transuming Passion: Ganymede and the Erotics of Humanism_* (Stanford, CA 1991), 93–98.
48. To choose one instance out of many, it is almost never remembered that the famous quatrain about the best of artists not having any concept that isn't contained within the marble block ("Non ha l'ottimo artista alcun concetto" [G151]) introduces a poem whose subsequent ten lines are not about sculpture at all but about the speaker's enslavement to his love object.

49. Insofar as one can follow the logical sequence among all the versions of the poem, these sketches appear already to be accomplishing some of the abbreviation that would ultimately lead from a seventeen- to a thirteen-line poem. On the complex and yet variable formal conventions of the madrigal, see W. Theodor Elwert, *Versificazione italiana dalle origini ai nostri giorni* (Florence 1976), 134–36; Sandro Orlando, *Manuale di metrica italiana* (Milan 1994), 146–52; and *Ryan, *Introduction*, 249–52.
50. See Girardi's exceptionally complicated, and speculative, reconstruction of these materials as parts of his G146—a poem which, in the final form as he presents it, contains virtually nothing of these lines. For other discussions of how this material might all be fitted together, see Creighton Gilbert, "Michelangelo's Madrigal 'Gli sguardi che tu strazii,'" *Art Bulletin* 26 (1944): 48–51; and Dante Isella, "Di un madrigale di Michelangelo (e d'altro)," in *Per Cesare Bozzetti: Studi di letteratura e di filologia italiana*, S. Albonico et al., eds. (Milan 1996), 465–70. An extremely interesting Huntington Library drawing (**Corpus* 364), which contains yet another bold sketch of a leg, includes further drafts of this same poetic material. In keeping with all the editorial perplexities of these fragments, it should be noted that the two tercets quoted here are so opaque—even, I am assured, to a native speaker with plenty of sixteenth-century reading experience and even in comparison to other fragments discussed in these pages—that any rendering must content itself yet more than usual with approximation.
51. See the constructions of the text in *Girardi, 412–14.
52. See **Corpus* 353 and *Dussler, cat. 229.
53. This is a case where Girardi recognizes that what he calls separate poems (including G270, discussed below in the present text) must be construed together; see *Girardi, 436–38.

8 DRAWING THE LINE

1. *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Standard Edition (London 1960), 6.278.
2. The expression "nulla dies sine linea," appears at *Natural History*, 34.84. See my discussion of the Renaissance life of this proverb (along with *ne sutor ultra crepidam*, "shoemaker, stick to thy last") in *Unearthing the Past*, 93. In her *Nulla dies sine linea: Ein problemgeschichtliche Studie* (Stuttgart 2004), Elke Schulze connects the life of this phrase directly with "Disegna Antonio," which we considered in Chapter 6. Indeed, there are a number of points in the latter part of the Vasari *Life*, treating Michelangelo's character, where there seems to be an implicit reference to this proverbial directive regarding assiduousness.
3. The phrase "death of the author," a watchword for certain strands of structuralist and post-structuralist literary theory in the latter decades of the twentieth century, comes from the title of a luminous essay by Roland Barthes that can be found in *Image, Music, Text*, S. Heath, trans. (New York, 1977), 142–48. "The Intentional Fallacy" is the title of an earlier, and equally influential essay by W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, which can be found in *The Verbal Icon* (Lexington, KY 1954), 3–20.
4. On this last category, see the *Carteggio indiretto*, P. Barocchi, K. L. Bramanti, and R. Ristori, eds., 2 vols. (Florence 1988).
5. For the mythology surrounding the visual artist, the great scholarly texts remain Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist* (New Haven, CT 1981); and Margot and Rudolf Wittkower, *Born under Saturn: The Character and Conduct of Artists* (New York 2006 reprint). On the poet side, see Lawrence Lipking, *Life of the Poet: Beginning and Ending Poetic Careers* (Chicago 1981); the essays in *European Literary Careers: The Author from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, P. Cheney and F. A. deArmas, eds. (Toronto 2002); and Albert Russell Ascoli's recent, and magisterial, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author* (Cambridge 2008). Closely connected to these arguments is, of course, the indispensable Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago 1980).
6. Freud's book-length essay deals with—in his enumeration—"forgetting, slips of the tongue, bungled actions, superstitions, and errors." For the link between this material and dreams, see the final sections of both *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (as in note 1 above) and *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Standard Edition (London 1953), 5.509–622.
7. See **Corpus* 207bis, *Dussler, cat. 43; and *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 344. See above, Chapter 2, where this sheet was also mentioned.
8. See, for instance, Johannes Wilde, "Notes on the Genesis of Michelangelo's Leda," in *Fritz Saxl: Memorial Essays*, D. J. Gordon, ed. (London 1957), 270–80.
9. See my discussion of this problematic in *Unearthing the Past*, 199–207. Two other scholarly undertakings, in very different styles but equally illuminating in this area, are Paul Barolsky's chapter on "The Poetry of the *Non Finito*" in his *Faun in the Garden* (University Park, PA 1994), 63–76, and David Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art* (Princeton, NJ 1981).

10. *Vasari-deV 2.681; "ancora che non siano finite le parti sue, si conosce nell'essere rimasta abozzata e gradinata, nella imperfezione della bozza, la perfezione dell'opera" (*Vasari-M 7.195).
11. *Vasari-deV 2.736; "Ha avuto l'immaginativa tale e sì perfetta, che le cose propostosi nella idea sono state tali, che, con le mani per non potere esprimere sì grandi e terribili concetti, ha spesso abandonato l'opere sue, anzi ne ha guasto molte; come io so che, innanzi che morissi di poco, abruciò gran numero di disegni, schizzi, e cartoni fatti di man sua, acciò nessuno vedessi le fatiche durate da lui ed i modi di tentare l'ingegno suo, per non apparire se non perfetto" (*Vasari-M 7.270).
12. For some context relative to this expression—which possesses a surplus of signification beyond any actual exegesis—see *Barocchi, *Vita,* 4.1853. For me, it seems irresistible to link it to Alberti's famous "più grassa Minerva," with which he begins the Italian version of *On Painting*, meaning (probably) that he is dealing with reality in its tangible material form: that, too, seems to be the message of Vasari as he maps the territory from the Platonic idea of the drawing to the physical realizations within the workplace.
13. This is, of course, Michelangelo's most thoroughly annotated poem. Already in his own lifetime, it was the basis for Benedetto Varchi's *Due Lezzioni*. Among more recent interpreters, see Summers, *Michelangelo*, 203–33. In quite a different vein is Colin Burrow's essay, "Why Shakespeare Is not Michelangelo" in *Thinking with Shakespeare: Comparative and Interdisciplinary Essays for A. D. Nuttall*, W. Poole and R. Scholar, eds. (London 2007), 9–22, an inspiring work even if I have trouble deciding whether I agree with either of its concluding assertions: "And that is why Shakespeare is not Michelangelo, and why too he is better than Michelangelo."
14. For "ogni dipintore dipinge sè," and its associations with Leonardo, see above, Chapter 1.
15. On Raphael, see *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Standard Edition, 4. 314. On Francis Galton, see *Interpretation of Dreams*, 4.139; and *Moses and Monotheism*, 23.10. On the visuality of dreams, see his succinct definition in the abbreviated version of the dream book (*On Dreams*, 5.659): "The manifest content of dreams consists for the most part in pictorial situations."
16. *Interpretation of Dreams*, 4.312.
17. *Interpretation of Dreams*, 4.314.
18. See especially Chapter 3 of Lessing's work. The expression *punctum temporis*, often applied to Lessing, owes its origins to an earlier work by James Harris, "Discourse on Music, Painting, and Poetry," in *Three Treatises* (London 1744). This whole discourse is masterfully interrogated by E. H. Gombrich in "Moment and Movement in Art," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 27 (1964): 293–306.
19. See Standard Edition, 13.212: "Why should the artist's intention not be capable of being communicated and comprehended in *words*, like any other fact of mental life?"
20. See **Corpus* 225r and v; *Dussler, cat. 46; and *Barocchi, *Michelangelo*, cat. 343.
21. As with many of the poems, the question of date is difficult to answer, with much depending on arguments concerning the evolution of Michelangelo's handwriting and on assumptions of a frictionless interplay between biographical circumstances and the content of the verse. See the account of the versions of this text and of its date in *Girardi, 196–98.
22. See William Sherman's delightful online essay, "Toward a History of the Manicule" at http://www.livesandletters.ac.uk/papers/FOR_2005_04_002.html.

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